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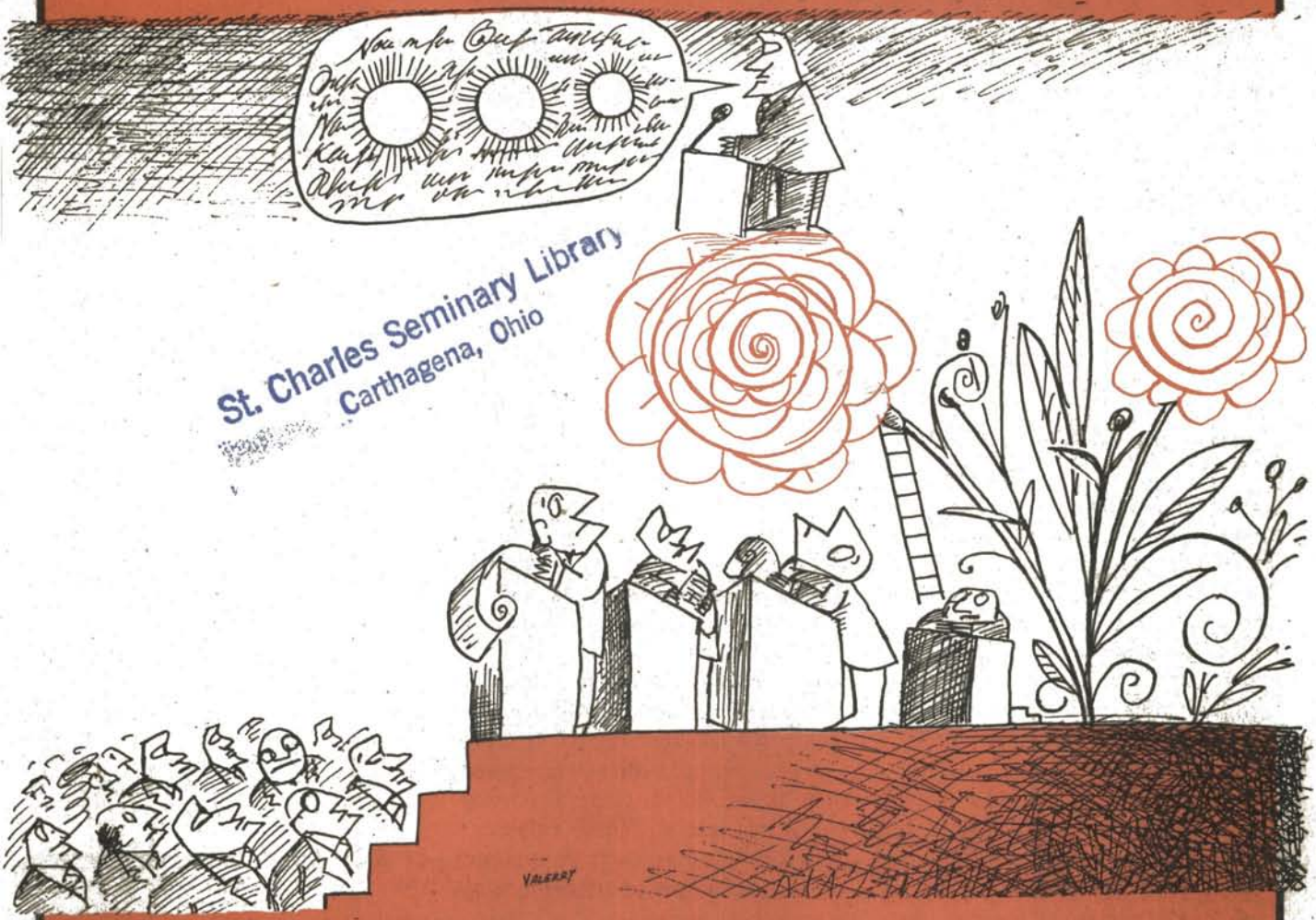

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CORRESPONDENCE

Work for the poor?

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Jim Sleeper discusses William Julius Wilson's work quite thoughtfully ["The Resegregation of America," November 6]. Wilson and I have much in common, though we disagree about the main cause of the underclass. I think permissive public programs are more important than the economic shifts he emphasizes. While those changes have occurred, they account rather for rising economic inequality among working people, not for the presence of a nonworking underclass.

Wilson and I have had a dialogue going for about a year on the main point in contention — whether jobs exist for the poor. The evidence, I think, heavily favors the view that jobs are normally available to unskilled adults. So the work problem among poor and dependent people must have other causes. "Workfare" could do much to overcome it.

The main violence Sleeper has done to me is to spell my name with an "e" on the end.

LAWRENCE M. MEAD

I was moved & troubled

Bethesda, Md.

To the Editors: I was deeply moved and troubled by Douglas Stevens's article,"Ethiopian Landscapes" [November 20]. Stevens gives us a series of vignettes and observations collected over a brief visit to that country. Yet they illuminate the Ethiopian landscape for the reader like the flashes of a strobe light in a darkened room.

As an ex-foreign aid official, I empathized with his thoughts, speculations, and experiences, having myself conducted countless "windshield surveys" in the rural areas of more developing countries than I care to admit. I have wondered whether the particular project I was observing was making a significant dent in the problem it was meant to address or in improving the lives of its "beneficiaries." And, like Stevens, I often wondered whether my perceptions of local "realities" had not been so colored by my cultural and social filters as to completely distort their real meaning. If one does not really understand the social, ethnic, and cultural landscapes of a country, the temptation to fall back on foreign aid rhetoric or untested assumptions becomes too great to resist.

Aside from such general reactions, the article provides a poignant, troublesome series of images of life in Ethiopia under a new tyranny. The images are glimpses of a beautiful country and a hard-working people that deserve a better future. I hope that *Commonweal* will publish more of Stevens's thought-provoking articles.

JOHN D. BLUMGART

I hesitate to judge

Bern, Switzerland

To the Editors: Douglas Stevens's personal perception of conservation in Ethiopia is a very fresh, creative, and provocative contribution to the problems and prospects he encountered. . . .

However, one should not underestimate the positive lessons that conserved watersheds have given to local communities and political leaders, irrespective of the means by which these were implemented. Nowadays, there is virtually nobody in Ethiopia unfamiliar with the conservation idea. Conservation of natural resources has become the legal obligation of the state, as well as the individual, in the recently accepted Ethiopian constitution. Maybe these projects have reached sufficient momentum to break the vicious circle of environmental degradation, famine vulnerability, and population growth. I would hesitate to suggest from outside better ways to achieve regeneration of "man and nature" in Ethiopia, because the problems are so complex. Socially trained extensionists, discussing with peasants the need for conservation, and seeking with them ways to control degradation, have real potential.

DR. HANS HURNI

I am struck by Stevens

Santa Barbara, Calif.

To the Editors: In reading Douglas Stevens's article, "Ethiopian Landscapes," in your November 20 issue, I am struck both by his appreciation of the richness of Ethiopian culture and landscape and by his frustration with development efforts. As it happens, I have known Mr. Stevens for thirty-five years, and we have corresponded in recent years about the difficulties in Christian service to our fellow humans. He, in the area of third-world economic development, and I, as a clinical psychologist in a California coastal community, have both encountered the frustrations inherent in working with the pain of our companions in life.

One tries at first to "help." Stevens wrote to me last year saying, "It's different for you . . . you actually help people." I had, of course, been thinking for years that I dealt in endless muddy situations of the psyche, while he was out in the world "helping" people with the nitty-gritty realities of economic life.

(Continued on page 94)

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COMMONWEAL

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Relieving debt fatigue

In January, the World Bank issued its most pessimistic annual report ever and clearly spelled out the human costs of a global economic slowdown. As economic growth has shriveled in third-world countries, so have living standards for the majority of their people. What has grown is indebtedness, by some 6.25 percent, reaching over $1 trillion last year. With large segments of the third-world population forced back into abject poverty, political and social pressures are mounting. In countries with new and fragile democracies, such as Brazil and Argentina, promises of a better future already seem broken. Creditors themselves are beginning to recognize the effects of what the report calls "debt fatigue"—weariness with imposed austerity measures that can wreak political havoc and lead to an instability jeopardizing business in general, not just loan repayments. Debt fatigue makes banks reluctant to provide new capital, further hampering economic recovery.

Consider Latin America, which owes half the third-world debt, and, compared with Africa, has the best chance of repaying. In Latin America's three largest debtor countries, the inflation rate is measured in three digits. Unemployment is rampant and the average income for those with jobs has declined nearly 10 percent since 1980. Brazil, debtor number one, stopped paying interest on its foreign debt last February, but has decided to make "a new beginning;" Brazil will pay $350 million on the $900 million interest bill that came due last month. Mexico, the region's number two debtor, hasn't seen any real increase in GNP since 1982, and its president-elect has gone on record as seeking to link debt repayments to economic performance. Argentina, debtor number three, has too few dollars in its reserve cupboard to make its next bond payment, and so, on the brink of default, is expected to ask for yet another "bridging loan." This tactic allowed Argentina to scrape by last year.

So far, no real solution to this debt conundrum is in sight. And the World Bank's report outlines bleak forecasts for the future, including a sluggish world economy. That's the bad news.

The good news—admittedly, uncertain—concerns Mexico. On December 29 the Mexican government and its agent, J.P. Morgan & Company, proposed a debt relief scheme. Although it is unlikely to become the region's "model," as some optimistic economists have hoped, it deserves a close and critical look.

The plan's goal is modest but sound: to reduce a sizable chunk of Mexico's current loan principal ($100 billion) and interest payments, by marking down its present debt in exchange for new Mexican bonds. The new bonds offer lenders greater security and a higher yield on interest than they are currently receiving. Interested banks have begun to place bids on percentages of debt they are willing to discount. Mexico is hoping for a 40 to 60 percent write-down on the portion of its principal that is eligible for the exchange. Such a write-down would significantly

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reduce Mexico's overall principal and its annual interest payment, offering some immediate and long-term relief.

A write-down of 50 percent, for example, would mean a reduction of some $20 billion. Mexico's annual interest saving would be in the range of $500 million to $1 billion. Currently, Mexico's debt service totals $7 billion a year.

Why would Mexico's creditor banks be interested in such a scheme? Because collecting some of the debt is better than writing off a whole loan or standing by while a nation unilaterally declares a debt repayment moratorium.

The Mexico - J.P. Morgan scheme has not won everyone's approval. Many banks prefer to sell their loans to other investors on the secondary market, so that they can receive direct and immediate payment. However, the secondary market is currently operating somewhere between a standstill and a crawl, a pace that could change at any time. One lucky lender, NCNB Corporation of North Carolina, recently sold its entire third-world portfolio at a 50 percent mark-down, but it has started no trend.

Since secondary market sales help only lenders and not debtors, Mexico has tried to make its new proposal attractive to some of its 500 U.S. creditor banks. As part of this effort, Mexico has purchased a $2 billion U.S. Treasury Bond that will be worth $10 billion when it matures in twenty years. The U.S. bond will serve as collateral for new Mexican bonds, which will be issued at a fluctuating interest rate to the highest bidders at a debt auction in March. In effect, Mexico has lent the U.S. $2 billion in exchange for the right to advertise that its new Mexican securities will be "backed by the American government."

This plan has the laudable feature of splitting the cost of the bad loans between creditors and debtor. That would be something of a watershed compromise in itself, since it entails an admission by the banks that the face value of Mexico's loans is only about half their current market value. But the plan also has drawbacks: it does not provide any link with Mexico's productivity or with fluctuations in the world economy. A sudden surge in the value of the dollar, rising world interest rates, another series of earthquakes in Mexico City, a general labor strike, or any other unforeseen adverse conditions could send Mexico back either to its debtors' prison or into default.

Other proposals for resolving the Latin American debt crisis abound. One of the more compelling argues that instead of swapping old debt for new, debt be exchanged for U.S. trade-credits. Such a direct connection to U.S. exports would help reduce our trade deficit. And it would be "fair": creditor nations deserve business if they can't get cash, and they shouldn't have to compete with nonlenders for it. But any genuine debt relief plan, including Mexico's proposal, would help balance trade to some degree. The Mexicans would gain new purchasing power; the U.S. could gain new markets.

Reviews of the Mexico plan have been mixed with most assessments between the two extremes of "not going nearly far enough in writing off the debt" and "setting a dangerous precedent."

In the long run, the "not going nearly far enough" school may well be proved right. But for the moment, in a situation of limited options, Mexico's plan is a pragmatic step in the right direction.

THEN THERE WERE NINE

In the ultimate gesture of judicial self-restraint, Judge Robert H. Bork is resigning from the federal appeals court in Washington, D.C. He wishes to vindicate his judicial views and take on his critics. Perhaps in so doing he will also satisfy his higher ambitions. Clearly, Mr. Bork would rather convince the public of his constitutional and political theories than remain a second-level player on the federal bench. His decision to absent himself from the appeals court underlines the wisdom of the Senate in rejecting his nomination to the Supreme Court last fall. One committed to his particularist views deserves to be free of constraining federal robes.

Whether Ronald Dworkin is correct (*New York Review of Books*, December 17, 1987) that following the defeat of the Bork nomination, "The standard of 'original intention,' as a strict and exclusive limit on the grounds of legitimate Supreme Court decisions, is probably dead," such constitutional questions will continue to be an essential locus in all future proceedings on federal judicial appointments. They clearly were evident in the recent hearings scrutinizing Judge Anthony M. Kennedy for nomination to the Supreme Court. When queried about his view of original intent by the Senate Judiciary Committee, Judge Kennedy—in sharp contrast to Judge Bork—responded that a mechanical search for "original intent" is not a useful method of constitutional interpretation. "New generations yield new insights and new perspectives," Judge Kennedy told the committee. "The idea that the Framers of the Constitution made a covenant with the future is what our people respect. . . . It would serve no purpose to have a Constitution that simply enacted the status quo."

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Marked from the start by the uncharacteristically nonconfrontational manner in which President Reagan forwarded the Kennedy nomination—his third attempt to fill the seat of retired Justice Powell—an almost lethargic equanimity settled over the Senate hearings. Yet the decided differences between the Kennedy and the Bork hearings only served to vindicate the Senate's consent process.

That process will be put to the test again next month when the Senate takes up twenty-seven other Reagan nominees to lower federal courts. These nominees deserve close review by the Senate. One nominee in particular, Bernard H. Siegan to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in California, merits attention. His views that all government economic regulations should be struck down by federal judges as "presumptively unconstitutional" prompted even Judge Bork to comment that such a policy would bring about "a massive shift away from democracy and toward judicial rule."

Judge Kennedy, by contrast, cautioned in his confirmation hearings that the "expanded role of the courts tends to erode the boundaries of judicial power." In his own words, if courts adjudicate claims by premises that are essentially political, "they forfeit the right . . . to the respect due a natural arbiter, and to lifetime tenure." Now that he has been assured of such a tenure on the nation's highest court, Judge Kennedy will do well to bear in mind his own counsel.

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

Maynard W. Glitman, who headed the U.S. delegation which negotiated the INF Treaty, testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last month that both the Soviets and the U.S. had agreed *not* to destroy the fissionable material from the nuclear warheads banned by the treaty.

Mr. Glitman offered several practical reasons for this decision, but one in particular caught our ear. According to negotiators, destroying the fissionable material would be difficult and problematic, and final deposition of the material would be even more daunting: where on earth (or under it) would the respective governments put all that nuclear waste?

Perhaps Mr. Glitman and his colleagues were thinking of the Department of Energy's permanent nuclear waste repository near Carlsbad, New Mexico, which has been plagued with engineering difficulties. Last year DOE admitted that the elaborate waste bunker—excavated 2,150 feet beneath the desert—had sprung a series of water leaks. Water may be welcome in most deserts, but to keep nuclear wastes safe in the Carlsbad cite—for the thousands of years called for by the engineering design—the DOE plutonium-containment repository would have to remain bone dry for the entire period. It seems the water—like all government leaks—arrived too early. Despite their efforts, engineers have not been able to stop the flow, now at 1.5 gallons per day. In time—millennial time at least—even Captain Nemo's *Nautilus* might find sufficient volumes for a subterranian port there.

In the last analysis, however, concern over the storage of the dismantled INF warhead materials was only a red herring. For as Mr. Glitman went on to testify, neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union ever really wanted to dismantle the warhead material in question. It seems both sides are a "little short" on fissionable material for their as yet unbanned warheads. To quote Mr. Glitman, both have an "interest in retaining" what each has worked so diligently to manufacture. Now that's an agreement—one that includes neither waste nor want for either side!

INTERVIEW IN MANAGUA

A HOLY WEEK CONVERSION

ONE WOMAN'S TESTIMONY

I was part of a Witness for Peace Delegation that visited Nicaragua from January 4-16, 1988. Among the twenty-two formal interviews we conducted was one with Maria del Socorro Gutierrez, Secretary of Urban Housing at the Ministry of Housing. Señora Gutierrez is an attractive, energetic woman around fifty years old, who spoke with us about the situation of women in Nicaragua as well as about her work in housing and resettlement. Toward the end of the interview she traced her history as a middle-class, Catholic Nicaraguan from the days of Somoza to the present. Although her testimony does not answer the larger political questions about the situation in Nicaragua, it is an important addition to our understanding.

SHEILA BROWN

SEÑORA GUTIERREZ: My story goes back many years. After Vatican II, my family, my friends, and I became involved in the Cursillo movement. For all of us this was a very exciting process. Before this, as Catholics, we had recognized that faith is a gift from God. I was raised without ever reading the Bible, and worshiped without understanding, as all was in Latin. We learned to accept fear, guilt, sin, and an abiding sense of the devil. We operated not on love, but on guilt.

In our twenties, we were exposed to the Cursillo—to the living presence of Christ. We read the Bible as though starved; we felt God was speaking to us through the Bible. We had new personal relationships, started a search for justice, and came to recognize God's presence in all. But something happened and we suddenly discovered that we were in a state of sin because of the shameful state of poverty all around us. We suddenly became aware. I'll tell you how that happened.

In Holy Week, everyone in Nicaragua, who can, goes on

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vacation. We all decided to go to the beautiful tropical island of Grenada in Lake Nicaragua. We packed all the food and, of course, the Bible. Our only worry was whether we would get too fat! We arrived at 5 A.M. on Wednesday. Some campesinos came to us and asked if we could help their sick nephew. We said, of course, because my two brothers, who are doctors, were with us. The baby arrived all covered up in a blanket. When we removed the cloth we realized he was near death from starvation. We felt a great sense of sorrow and shame. This was like Biafra. My child was large and fat. Nothing could be done. The campesino baby died on Good Friday. And so, for us, the party was over.

As soon as I returned to Managua, I started researching statistics on infant mortality. I came to realize that for most campesino women there was a terrible struggle for children to survive. We were educated, middle-class people, and when one lives surrounded by the poor, one becomes used to it. It is like those who pass by in the story of the Good Samaritan.

When the Guardia [Somoza's militia] started striking hard on the campesinos, one had to make a choice. We signed denunciations of their actions, and these were circulated throughout Managua by the Capuchin priests. We chose not to use weapons, but we became more and more involved with the campesinos. We knew of the deaths of the children. . . . Many families disappeared and their bodies turned up on the hills. So we knew we had to do something. My doctor brother started helping the sick poor. He was imprisoned, escaped, and fled the country. They started persecuting us. We started hiding people. As we came to know them, we realized they could easily be dead the next day.

The process of struggle brought people together. We then became involved, through the Cursillo, with Christian Base Communities, which had developed in poor neighborhoods. The Guardia at first didn't bother the nice neighborhoods, but for the poor the reference text was the book of Exodus—it offered tremendous hope that God would grant freedom. "We are in the desert, but we will reach the promised land"—a land of freedom and dignity. The kingdom of God will not be established on earth, that will only come in the end. The kingdom of God is within, but we must realize the values of God in the present. All values are based on justice and dignity and these are based on love.

Realizing this, we started collaborating with the Frente (Sandinistas). Many said, "Be careful, they are Marxist-Leninist." We asked them, "What is your program?" The answer: to read, to have land, to be healthy. I realized that this is the program of life. If this is Communism, and maybe it is (but I have never read it, and have no time to study now) but if this is Communism, then Communism is welcome.

I have six children. The oldest is twenty-nine and in business administration working for the government; the second is twenty-seven studying for his master's degree in Mexico. The third is an electrical engineer; he studied in Belgium and is working in Germany where he is employed by a Nicaraguan electrical firm. The fourth is in the army and is a psychology student. The fifth is in the army. And the sixth is my fourteen-year-old daughter. My children have taught me a lot. Three of my five sons went into the mountains during the literacy campaign. I am concerned for my sons in the the army, as I know that many have fallen. I remember the day I sent my sons off in the trucks; there were many young men all with rifles, some with guitars. They were smiling and laughing and reassuring their mothers that they would be all right. I prayed that all would come back, and knew that this was not possible. I then realized that one had to move from individual prayer to collective prayers, that the womb of one's heart must be opened to the motherhood of all. Fourteen of our colleagues here in the ministry have been killed in the war, killed while building resettlement villages, not while fighting. So we feel the collectivity of motherhood here. All the activities of Nicar-

Pining away with Buck & Florence

When the old pine tree in my backyard lost a large branch and swayed ominously in the last windstorm, I decided it was *sayonara*. As much as I enjoy seeing moonlight through the pine, it's mainly because it reminds me of Ray Charles singing "Georgia." Other than that pleasant association, the pines block my view of the mountains, drip sap on my cars, and litter my yard with pine needles.

The representative from Eager Beaver Tree Demolition offered to cut down the offending and perilous pine for three hundred dollars.

"You're kidding!" I guffawed. As I settle into curmudgeonhood, guffawing comes more naturally.

"It's the insurance," he explained. "You wouldn't believe the increase in my premium."

"Thanks, but no thanks."

"I could do it for two hundred and fifty."

"That's OK. I'll pick up the branches and put up with the sap."

"Whatever you decide. But me, I wouldn't want to live that close to a dying tree with two little babies in the house."

Next day Eager Beaver called me to offer a no-frills job for two hundred. I said I'd get back to him if I changed my mind.

My wife strongly urged me to let Eager Beaver do it. "You get what you pay for," she said. "They'll get it down safe and sound."

I said I thought two hundred bucks was still way out of line. Florence, who helps clean the house, chimed in. "That's a lot for a little ole pine. My husband drops those pines by the dozen out our way. He charges twenty-five dollars."

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agua are sealed in blood. We are fulfilling a commitment when building these houses that is sealed with the blood of man.

We see the presence of God in the struggle between good and evil. We want only to build, but there is a force of destruction here. I feel the strength of God to rebuild under incredible difficulties—in the campos and in the city—we have great shortages of power, water, food. We have two hundred thousand displaced persons. Our principal purpose is to provide shelter for all of these.

Many complain—there is no oil, no sugar, no beans and rice—but when talking about what to do, all come together in a most impressive way. A few weeks ago, I was in the countryside and some *contras*—I heard that they were drunk—attacked a truck and killed a young boy and the driver. They cut off the fingers, the testicles, the ears. It was terrible. At the funeral only a few would join the procession, as people are frightened. Gradually more joined, and by the time we reached the graveyard there were nearly a thousand. It is the solidarity, the accompaniment in suffering and death that we hope to see in the Resurrection. It is my conviction that we are now living through a crucifixion.

I have been to the United States, to Virgina. There is so much comfort, but no access to real information. People are sealed off by the wall of comfort that isolates them from information. So groups like yours are very much appreciated. Many are starting to experience the Calvary that we are going through. We are not a tourist country so to come here is to know the life of the people. It places you in a dilemma. In your

---

Florence's husband Buck arrived the next morning on a huge Harley-Davidson, with a chain saw strapped to his back. Our older daughter Kaitlin refused to go to day-care until she saw the tree fall.

Buck is the kind of guy with whom I ordinarily talk about football, but he doesn't follow football. "That's a great jacket," I said instead.

"You like it? Florence put on the silver studs. Now whaddwa we got?"

After inspecting it quickly, Buck said, "That little pine? Jeez, I'll drop that for nothing."

I demurred, not too stubbornly.

"Naw, I wouldn't take anything for cuttin' that pine. You could give me a beer."

As Buck was cutting the wedge in the tree it occurred to me that I hadn't asked about insurance. But the guy had dropped dozens of pines and I didn't want to question his expertise. There was some kind of male principle at stake here, having to do with his studded jacket.

My wife, our daughter Kaitlin, and our infant daughter Amanda all watched Buck intently through the window. Although it's hard to estimate the height of a tree, this one was clearly tall enough to fall on the house. As I was deliberating whether or not to send my wife to the rear of the house — another male principle, called protecting the women-folk—Buck cursed loudly.

"What's he saying, Daddy?"

"I don't know, sweetheart — why don't you and Mummy play with Amanda in the playroom?"

Buck was stalking around the tree muttering obscenities. "Damn thing buckled on me in the wind!"

"What do you mean, Buck?"

"Damn thing! Just as I was cutting the wedge, the wind pushed her. See how she's swayin' over the house right now?"

"Uh," I said, "you mean it's half-way sawed through, only leaning the wrong way?"

Pause.

"What are you going to do, Buck?"

"I dunno. We could tie it and pull it in the opposite direction—maybe if we got three or four guys pulling hard. . . ."

"Buck, is that tree going to fall on my house?"

"I hope not. You insured?"

This very question had already occurred to my wife, who called me over to whisper, "The insurance company says we are covered for acts of God but not for acts of stupidity."

I told her to mind the girls and leave this to the men.

The pine was definitely listing toward my house. The roof, the new kitchen windows, and maybe the porch were all in imminent jeopardy.

"Buck, what about cutting off the top of the tree, so it can't reach the house?"

Buck hesitated.

"Buck, I don't want to overstate the case here, but pretty much everything I have on this earth is underneath that tree, and I had faith in your ability to protect us."

Buck looked toward the top of the tree, strapped the chain saw around his neck, and said, "What the hell. You only die once." Then, quick as a monkey he was shimmying up the pine. I wondered if Florence, to whom I had always been friendly, would sue me for widow's benefits. Nearly nauseous with anger and terror, I watched Buck hold a chain saw with one hand and cut off the top thirty feet of the pine.

It crashed to earth, Buck scampered down, and the whole tree toppled over toward my house one minute after Buck landed. . . .

After we had downed a good bit of Jack Daniels — beer seemed a little ordinary for this day of days — Buck let me try on his leather jacket and listened to my Marlon Brando imitations. He even told me about a factory outlet where I can buy a leather jacket, for less than I would have paid Eager Beaver Tree Demolition.

ROBERT H. BELL

Robert H. Bell teaches English at Williams College and is a frequent contributor to Commonweal.

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Congress, a life and death decision is being debated, as a question of budgets. Your tax money comes back to Nicaragua to kill Nicaraguans. The question is, do you go with the project of life or with murder? We are all children of God.

I thank you for coming and trust that the Lord will enlighten you.

SHEILA BROWN *is a contractor and cabinet maker in New York. The interview was conducted on January 15, 1988, and notes taken of a simultaneous translation of Señora Gutierrez's remarks.*

REPORT FROM PARAGUAY

ON THE THRESHOLD

PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRACY

At first glance, the winds of democracy swirling through South America appear to have come to a standstill in Paraguay. Since coming to power thirty-four years ago, President General Alfredo Stroessner has effectively squelched dissent through an elaborate system of *pyragüés* (spies), patronage, corruption, and, when needed, heavy-handed repression. Yet, in Paraguay today there is a mood of cautious optimism. Beneath Stroessner's carefully crafted veneer of "peace and progress" there has arisen an incipient movement to change the course of Paraguayan history.

Democracy in Paraguay is virtually unknown. More than 75 percent of Paraguay's current population has lived only under the government of the ruling Colorado party. Their history riddled with coups, countercoups, and revolutions, Paraguayans harbor no illusions that change will come rapidly.

On a trip I took to Paraguay in December, Paraguayan Bishop Mario Melanio Medina commented that a process that has been put into place over a thirty-year period cannot be easily undone in three to five years. "In the short term, the possibilities for democratization are not very great, because the social organizations and the opposition political parties are just barely consolidating themselves," he told me. "The regime is decaying from within, however, and that may accelerate the change."

Corruption and contraband (the *Washington Post* reported on November 11, 1987 that nearly half of the 85,000 cars in Paraguay had been stolen from Brazilian motorists) have been rife throughout the Stroessner years, particularly during the boom years one decade ago. The completion of the Itaipu hydroelectric dam with Brazil, however, and a drop in world market prices for soya beans and cotton (Paraguay's major exports), left Stroessner with fewer goods to distribute to his cronies in the military and in the Colorado party — the cornerstones of his power base. Drug trafficking, contraband, and large-scale corruption expanded to cover the decline in foreign exchange. Stroessner's former supporters in the business community who were trying to compete through legitimate channels found themselves pushed out of the market. Stroessner's efforts to court foreign investors at the expense of domestic producers further aggravated relations with Paraguayan industrialists.

The deterioration of the regime also stems from the inevitable aging of the dictator himself. While the seventy-five-year-old patriarch grooms his son, Gustavo, as his successor, other sectors of the governing Colorado party jockey for power.

The crisis came to a head last August, during the Colorado party convention to elect new party leadership. The *"militantes"* sector of Stroessner loyalists, supported by the police, forcibly prevented the *"tradicionalistas"* faction of the Colorado party from entering the convention hall. The *tradicionalistas* had invoked the wrath of Stroessner for hinting at the need to begin thinking about the future of the party once Stroessner is gone.

Dr. Juan Ramón Cháves, head of the *tradicionalista* sector and Colorado party president for the last twenty-five years, was one of the few who managed to penetrate the police barricade — just long enough to present an unsuccessful resolution to suspend the convention.

The freshly purged Colorado party then unanimously approved the candidacy of General Alfredo Stroessner for the next presidential election, scheduled for this February 14. There is a saying in Paraguay that Paraguayans vote for their leaders, but they do not elect them. In the rural areas, I was told, officials seldom even bother to count the ballots.

With General Stroessner consistently claiming 91 percent of the votes, the opposition parties interested in challenging him have long since withdrawn from electoral politics. Those who remain, aptly known as the "rented opposition," share the

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remaining 9 percent. While Stroessner is not expected to lose his eighth five-year term, some analysts predict he will claim closer to 80 percent of the vote this time around.

Stroessner has responded to the dissent in his party, now divided into at least seven factions, with brute force, even against previous long-time allies. When over three hundred members of the *tradicionalista* sector of the Colorado party published a document in December entitled, "The Democratic Thesis: No More Stroessner," one of the signators, Felipe Melgarejo, was forced into hiding after police arrested his wife and threatened to kill her and their children. Police prevented another dissident Colorado sector, the *Ethicos*, from presenting a proposal calling for blank votes in the upcoming election.

Stroessner's relentless grip on the press contributes to surface perceptions that it is business as usual. All television is completely controlled by the government, and since the 1984 closure of Paraguay's foremost daily, *ABC Color*, Paraguay has had no opposition daily. *El Pueblo*, the weekly bulletin of Paraguay's only legal opposition political party (the Revolutionary Febrerista party), was shut down in 1987.

In this context, the Catholic church's radio station, *Radio Caritas*, and the Paraguayan bishops' conference newspaper, *Sendero*, are key sources of information. The radio, increasingly bold since last year's closure of the independent and combative *Radio Nanduti*, has been under pressure to limit the scope of its coverage. Some analysts predict, however, that the church media will be given a relatively free hand until after Pope John Paul II visits Paraguay in May.

Both the church and the state are struggling to claim the pope's visit as their own. Human rights and peasant groups, the laity, indigenous and women's groups, labor and politicians, all hope to present their perspectives to the pope on the state of the union. While the government bills the trip as a state visit, the bishops affirm that the visit is a pastoral mission.

This is not the first time that church and state in Paraguay have not seen eye-to-eye. Two years ago, relations chilled significantly when Paraguay's bishops spearheaded a National Dialogue. Now in its final stages, the Dialogue brought together social and political sectors to engage in discussions about Paraguay's future. The initiative was sharply attacked by the government, which has refused to participate. The president of the Paraguayan bishops' conference, Archbishop Ismael Rolon, called the Dialogue a "demonstration that where there is a plurality of opinion there can also be unity."

Late last year, church-state relations became even icier when government officials openly backed "extraofficial" gangs connected to the government's Colorado party which had violently raided a parish hall and beaten a priest and a number of political leaders. In response, the church excommunicated thirty-seven militants implicated in the affair and called for a nationwide campaign against the government-inspired violence. That campaign included moments of silence during Sunday Masses, the tolling of church bells once a week, and silent processions throughout the country.

In a nation where street demonstrations are met with clubs and sticks, the participation of thousands of people in these church-organized marches signified a marked diminishing of fear. One such procession in October in Asuncion, called by Catholic lay organizations and supported by Archbishop Rolon, gathered an estimated 30,000 people, the largest protest march in thirty-four years of Stroessner's rule. As one woman reminded me, "Five years ago, no one here would even whisper the word, 'dictator.'"

This gradual lessening of fear, combined with divisions in the government's ruling party, a growing consolidation of social organizations, and the shift toward popularly elected governments elsewhere in Latin America, spell hope for Paraguay. Prospects for democracy there look better than they have in decades.

VIRGINIA M. BOUVIER

Virginia M. Bouvier is a senior associate with the Washington Office on Latin America, and has written previously for Commonweal *on events in South America.*

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

CITIZENS OF A GOOD POLIS

THE PROPER CURRICULUM

I have always found it ironic, hence amusing, that the theme song for William Buckley's TV program, "Firing Line," is an excerpt from Bach's "Brandenburg Concertos." I suppose this is Buckley's way of making the point that conservatives are attached to tried and true values, of which Bach is simply an example.

The trouble is, of course, that one can be the kind of conservative who loves Bach and all that he symbolizes, or one can be the kind of conservative who loves Adam Smith and all that he symbolizes; but one can hardly be both kinds at the same time. Bach's career ended (1750) a generation before Smith published *Wealth of Nations*, a revolutionary book that appeared, appropriately enough, the same year as the American Declaration of Independence. Bach's music was the last sunburst of vanishing culture, the ancient culture of West European Christendom, which, though it had been in the process of disintegration for several centuries, still clung to life in the first half of the eighteenth century; Smith's book was the dawn of a new culture, the Enlightenment, which was downright hostile to the old culture of Christendom.

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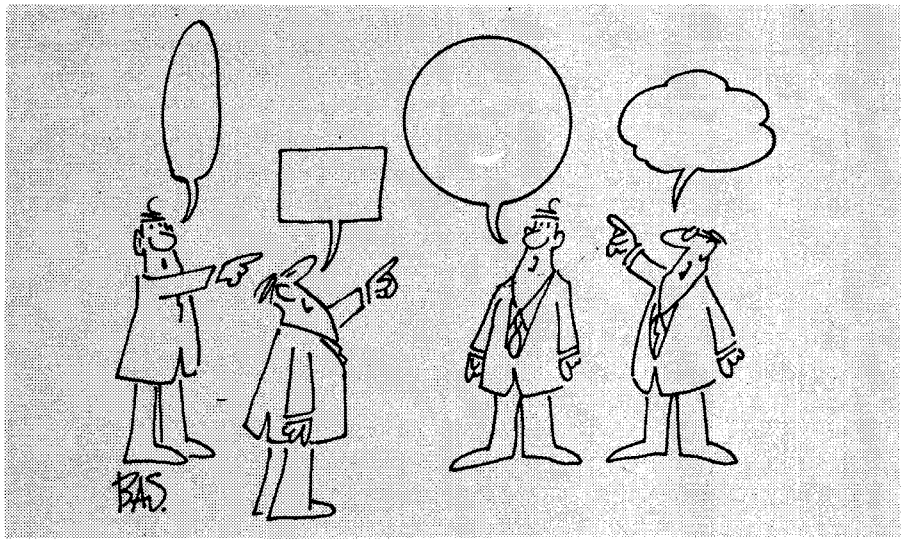

In other words, one can be an economic conservative or a cultural conservative; that Buckley is both at the same time is simply an eccentric tour de force, not a model that the world can follow.

I don't know whether it is Buckley's influence, but, despite the incompatibility between cultural conservatism and economic conservatism, the Republican party, long the natural home of economic conservatives, has become increasingly hospitable to cultural conservatives. This first became evident in the heyday of Vice-president Spiro Agnew. This was the time, around 1970, when the educational left entered into an alliance with students who didn't feel like studying very hard, and together they inscribed "relevance" on their banners. The foe of relevance and the friend of traditional educational values, Agnew, in those intervals of free time when he wasn't receiving envelopes stuffed with cash, would give homilies affirming the need for our young people to study (of all things!) Milton's poetry.

I don't know if Mike Deaver, Ed Meese, Lynn Nofziger, John Poindexter, and Ollie North qualify as cultural conservatives, though some of them at least might profit from reflecting on the great Miltonic theme of temptation; and the president himself is waiting, I understand, for the *Reader's Digest* version of *Paradise Lost*. But in Reagan's cabinet there is at least one person who counts as a genuine cultural conservative: William Bennett, the Secretary of Education, who recently published "James Madison High School," a booklet proposing "a model high school curriculum." This curriculum would require, among other things, three years of math and four years of literature for high school students — not just for those who are college-bound, but for *all* secondary students.

The premise of Bennett's essay is that there are certain things every civilized American ought to know. This premise also lies at the foundation of "American Memory," by Lynne Cheney, who heads the National Endowment for the Humanities, and of E.D. Hirsch's best-seller, *Cultural Literacy*. In fact, this premise, namely, that there is in principle a canonical list of items that everyone ought to know, is what differentiates cultural conservatives from their rivals.

As a speculative exercise, Bennett's model curriculum is very attractive. Further, his notion that all students should follow the same core curriculum has great appeal to anyone who believes that equality of educational opportunity involves, not merely equal access to school buildings, but equal access to the intellectual goods distributed in those buildings. But as a method for getting Americans to know what they ought to know, Bennett's scheme is not likely to work.

The secretary of education, like virtually every other reformer on today's educational landscape, greatly overrates the importance of schooling. Despite paying lip-service to the concept that there are important agencies of education in the world besides schools, education reformers, when they come down to cases, rarely speak about reforming anything but schooling. For all practical purposes, they talk and write as though schooling and education were the same thing. But they are most definitely not the same thing. Children get educated by schools, yes, but also by TV, movies, records, churches, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the Y, etc., and above all by their families and peer groups. If we are serious about reforming education, it will not be enough to improve the school curriculum; we'll have to improve the "curriculum" offered by all those other education agencies as well.

The truth is that the curriculum found in the average American public high school is not that far off Bennett's mark. Of all the components of American education, the one that perhaps needs the least improvement is the high school curriculum. But after we have improved the daylights out of it, our condition won't be a whole lot better than when we started out. For while professional teachers will be trying to pull students in the direction of literary, scientific, and historical knowledge, the students will be pulled in the opposite direction by the world around them. Neither MTV nor the typical American household is much concerned about the fall of ancient Rome or the rise of modern science. And what are a few teachers and their high-toned curriculum among so many?

The ancient Greeks understood this sort of thing better than we do. They liked to tell the story of the man who asked how to obtain a good education for his son. "Make him the citizen of a good *polis*," he was told. In other words, it is society as a whole that educates, and it is the culture of society itself that constitutes the curriculum.

The problem is that in America, public policy-makers have no handle on education except the handle provided for them by schools. So they first deceive themselves and then everyone else into believing that this handle is sufficient. Getting rid of this false belief is the first step toward genuine improvement in American education.

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COUNTER-POWER IN SAN ANTONIO

POVERTY, POLITICS, & THE PASTORAL

HENRY CISNEROS

About fifty years ago San Antonio fell asleep. The city dropped from being the most important city in Texas in the 1930s to being one of the poorest by the 1960s. By then San Antonio was so poor that Peace Corp volunteers were trained in its barrios to simulate the conditions they would face in Latin America. Thousands of Hispanics and black families lived in *colonias*, with common-wall, shot-gun houses built around public sanitation facilities with outdoor toilets. The barrios had no sidewalks or paved streets, no drainage system or flood control. Every spring brought flooding; families were driven from their homes; children walked to school through mud sloughs. In the shadow of downtown San Antonio lurked a stateside third-world "country."

During those fifty years a conscious effort was made by the city fathers and the few families who controlled the city to keep out industry. They feared that industry might generate competition for workers, drive up wages, and encourage the formation of unions. All of this might crack the city's delicate, ethnic-racial tension.

The 1960s saw some awakening in the form of emerging Hispanic leaders. In 1961, for example, San Antonio elected the first Hispanic to serve in the U.S. Congress; several other Hispanics became members of the state legislature. While these men developed loyal constituencies, no mass movement evolved to enable poor people to emerge from entrenched poverty.

At the same time large sums of money from the War on Poverty flowed into the city. While some poverty conditions were ameliorated, Northwestern University professor John L. McKnight's assessment is correct: "To the degree that the War on Poverty attempted to provide services in lieu of power or income it failed. You cannot service somebody to freedom and liberty. In our society these come from income or power, and unless something happens to change the quantum of these two things, poor neighborhoods won't change."

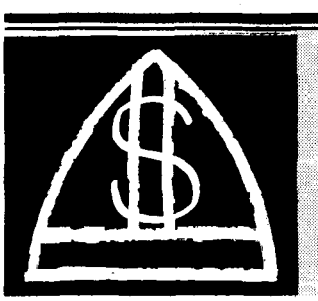
A major shift began to occur in the early 1970s when Ernesto Cortez, a skilled community organizer, came to San Antonio. Cortez, a sophisticated heir of the Saul Alinsky tradition of community organizing, operated from the premise that the unequal distribution of privilege in the city resulted from institutional arrangements, rather than from differences in talent, desire, or individual ability among the various ethnic and racial communities.

His objective was to change those institutional arrangements, or to paraphrase McKnight, "change the quantums." Rather than organizing a constituency to support aspiring politicians, Cortez sought to build a membership organization of poor and low-income families around an agenda based on the defined needs of members themselves. The ultimate objective was to rearrange the city's institutional patterns by empowering the people to make the changes.

As a base for the people's organization, he found that the fundamental building block for unity and strength among Hispanics was the Catholic church. After gaining the support of the late Archbishop Francis J. Furey of San Antonio, he began to build the membership organization through Catholic parishes.

The organization needed leadership. Instead of utilizing the conventional source, i.e., popular, political types, he looked for indigenous leaders within the poor communities: coaches of little league teams, women active in the Altar Society, the men who worked the booths at parish bazaars, the women who cooked the parish dinners. He looked for, and found, people who were deeply committed to their communities, their chil-

HENRY CISNEROS *is the mayor of San Antonio, Texas. This article is adapted from an address to diocesan directors of the Campaign for Human Development last year in Washington, D.C.*



This is one in a series of articles, to appear in *Commonweal* over a period of several months, that will examine different aspects of the U.S. bishops' pastoral.

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dren, their school, and their church.

The organizing efforts had to overcome apathy and fear in the poor communities, resistance from conservative Catholics, and outright opposition from the established leadership of the city. Out of these efforts, and with financial support from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development and from Protestant agencies, evolved an organization called Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS).

I can say, unequivocally, COPS has fundamentally altered the moral tone and the political and physical face of San Antonio. It has also confirmed the judgment of the U.S. Catholic bishops' pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All* — that one way to overcome poverty is to empower the poor to participate more fully in decisions that affect their lives.

COPS was the force most responsible for the present structure of government in San Antonio. Before 1977, the nine-member city council was elected at large. The council that I served on from 1975-77 had two Hispanics in a city that was almost 55 percent minority. Things changed in 1977 when the U.S. Justice Department called for an election that offered voters a choice about the structure of the council. The vote was 51 percent in favor of a district system for electing council members; 49 percent opposed. The margin of victory came from the COPS districts where the vote was 96 percent in favor of the change. The vote fundamentally altered the politics of the city. The election also resulted in seating six Hispanic members on an eleven-member council. Another effect has been an increase in voting percentages in minority districts. The experience of voting and electing candidates has been empowering for the residents.

The change also affected San Antonio physically. Over the years COPS has been active in extending an equitable distribution of public services. Streets, sidewalks, and flood control developments exist now where there were none. The city can

Poor people: advocates on their own behalf

Try to imagine that Congress is planning a major overhaul of the tax laws that will affect your income and the incomes of millions of people like you. They do so while making it clear that neither you nor anyone else likely to be affected will be included in the deliberations. Your interests will be represented by the IRS.

Substitute the words "welfare reform" for "tax reform," "poor people" for "people like you," "welfare administrators" for "IRS," and you are face-to-face with means-tested democracy, American style.

This scene is played out daily on issues important to ten million Americans who are poor. Even now with an extended debate on welfare reform underway in Congress, nobody seems to have asked poor people, or the organizations to which they belong, for advice, or invited them as witnesses, or given them opportunities to review various drafts.

Staffs responsible for the major welfare reform proposals were asked by students from the Institute for Social Justice at The Catholic University's School of Social Service, whether poor people and welfare recipients were consulted. The short answer: "barely." One key committee aide (who knew of no congressperson who'd consulted directly with welfare recipients) conceded, "Poor people aren't consulted the way other interest groups are." That proved true for members of both parties, and both sexes. An aide to one congresswoman said her boss saw herself as "serving a parenting role"; that welfare mothers needed to be "guided," not consulted.

It's as though in losing their incomes, poor people also lost their right to be treated like competent adults. (The situation is somewhat better at state and local levels, where elected officials tend to be more accessible generally, including to poor people.)

As the pastoral letter on the economy recognized, something very fundamental is at stake in this question of participation and consultation. Among poverty's costs, the bishops wrote, are the "denial of full participation in the economic, social, and political life of society, and an inability to influence decisions that affect one's life." The obligation to do something about poverty and human dignity implies an obligation to make sure that poor people can act as advocates on their own behalf and that they participate in the deliberations that affect their lives.

But if the problem is obvious to anyone familiar with the policy process, oddly enough, the solution is not. Otherwise smart, decent people—some of whom work on behalf of the poor—claim not to know whom to consult or what to do when it comes to including poor people. How do you find a poor person who knows how to testify (serve on a board, discuss policy changes)? How do you find "representative" poor people? (If they're so savvy, how can they be "typical"?) In fact, getting poor people involved in decisions that affect them is no different from involving any other group, starting with the obvious.

Start with organizations and groups that have low-income people among their leadership, as a matter of policy or law: welfare rights organizations, tenants' councils, ACORN chapters, most Women's Economic Agenda Projects (WEAP), and the National Anti-Hunger Coalition (NAHC) are organizations with low-income leadership. Legal services, community action, and Head Start programs, as well as grantees of the Campaign for Human Development, all have low-income people on their boards. Ask social agencies serving low-income people to recommend current or former clients. (The

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sustain heavy rainfalls, like the record storm in 1986. No lives were lost, no families were forced out of their homes. That could not have happened thirteen years ago.

COPS intervened in securing improved police and fire protection in San Antonio's poor barrios. It was a major voice in the campaign to force the utility system to establish a more equitable rate structure for poor and low-income families.

However, certain basic needs of poor and low-income families, such as public education and indigent health care, cannot be met solely from the private or public resources within a city. State-wide resources must be brought into play. In this regard, the value of organizations modeled after COPS can be seen. Again heavily funded by the Campaign for Human Development, these organizations have formed in Austin, Brownsville, El Paso, Forth Worth, and Houston. Eventually the influence of this network of organizations was brought to bear on the Texas state government.

For example, 1984 marked the conclusion of a state-wide campaign by this network and others to secure the passage of legislation that changed the method of financing public schools. Education funds had been distributed to schools based on the property value of homeowners in the respective school districts. As a result, seven times as much money was spent on a child in the richest school district in Dallas as compared to a child in the poorest district in Texas. The new legislation applies an equalizing factor that significantly reduces the disparity. In 1985 the Texas legislature passed a $70 million indigent health care package, the first in Texas history. The COPS network was a major influence in the passage of the bill.

Earlier I referred to the moral impact this empowerment process has had on San Antonio. Let me offer several exam-

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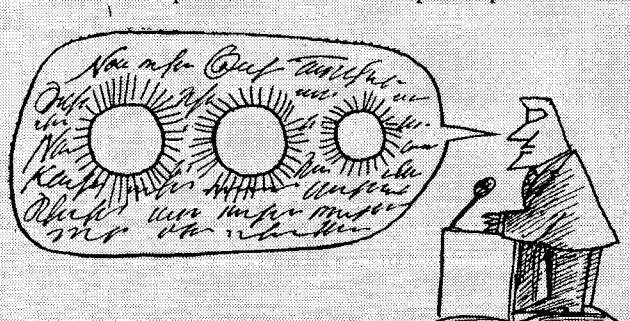
National Anti-Hunger Coalition defines "recipient" as anyone who is or has been in a means-tested social program in the past two years. That recognizes that someone whose life is in chaos may not have the energy for a political fight, while recognizing the importance of spokespeople whose personal experience is still fresh.) Then try organizations whose members are likely to be low-income: senior citizens, families with retarded or disabled family members, displaced homemakers, unions with many unemployed members, divorcees or single parents; plus churches in poor neighborhoods, and emergency food and shelter providers.

What about the effectiveness or representativeness of poor people as witnesses or consultants? It helps to remember that not every bishop who testifies at a hearing changes the course of legislative history; not every doctor on a health commission speaks for all doctors; and not everyone who cares about an issue is articulate and politically savvy. If a wonderfully articulate homeless man seems a bit "unrepresentative," so does an articulate athlete or a witty academic—we not only let them speak for their groups, we are happy to have found such effective representatives. Low-income people—articulate or not—have a right to represent themselves.

And if they don't start out political, low-income people have as much potential for leadership and political involvement as any other inexperienced group, including young people, women, and much of the politically inactive public. Nurturing that potential requires time and deliberate steps, such as creating "scholarships" for low-income participants whenever "board training" is scheduled for local nonprofit agencies.



Perhaps the most useful service the nonpoor have to offer the poor is "access." Those who can get calls returned (from journalists, legislative staff, the offices of elected officials); who can get on witness lists for state, local, or congressional hearings; who get copies of proposals while they are still in draft form (and get invited to comment on them), need to share that with low-income people. If corporate executives really want to help poor people, they should "tithe" their lobbyists' time to work on poor people's issues. Access is part of the power that low-income people lack and so are advocates accountable to them. Having both will spawn a pool of low-income political junkies willing and able to do battle in the political arena.

Still, some things are different about including poor people. They can't pay their own way (even small costs like transportation, and babysitters have to be picked up). They face risks that don't apply to others; just speaking out seems to invite repercussions (that's why low-income organizations are more likely to be outspoken than low-income individuals). Politicians and social agencies like poor people to be grateful—and docile.

Whatever the mechanism, what's at stake is a commitment to participation irrespective of income and to the results that flow from being in the game. As Jesse Jackson recently reminded an audience, "The other candidates are offering you a lot of goodies. . . . If you are empowered, you can get your own goodies." NANCY AMIDEI

Nancy Amidei has written frequently on poverty, hunger, and human services issues in these pages.

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ples. Because of COPS's success, its leaders have been under constant scrutiny by certain sectors in the city. I can safely say that because of the quality of the leaders, there has never been a hint of corruption or scandal associated with COPS. The leaders are thoroughly trained in their commitment to the betterment of the lives of families in the community, rather than harboring ambitions of private gain or public acclaim.

The second example touches upon the level of the institutional church. The church — through the parishes and in turn, the parishioners who are members of COPS — has created a new peaceful force for change in San Antonio. The movement has had a revitalizing effect on the Hispanic church. Catholic churches in the poor barrios are better attended today than ever. Parishioners now see a church that is relevant to their needs.

I have said that a policy of empowerment of the poor is good for poor people. Let me now offer some observations to support my conviction that empowerment of the poor enriches the whole community. From my experience, the quality of political dialogue, as well as the decision-making process, has improved in San Antonio because of the influence of COPS. A major factor is COPS's insistence with its leadership that in the pursuit of a greater common good there are no permanent allies and no permanent enemies. In negotiating with officials in the private or public sectors this strategy has several benefits. COPS maintains its political independence. For example, I can not claim that COPS is an ally of the mayor's office. We have had major disagreements over policies, and undoubtedly we will again as other issues arise.

I have seen members of COPS talk to some of their staunchest opponents on one issue, and convert them into collaborators on another issue. What matters for COPS members is the issue. COPS has been able to stay on that high ground, and because its members have maintained that level, they sustain their credibility and have changed the quality of political dialogue in San Antonio.

COPS members are well schooled in the details of their issues and as a consequence bring a strong negotiating position to the dialogue. This forces the other actors in the dialogue to sharpen the quality of their arguments, and the quality of resulting agreement is enhanced.

There is now a strong voice representing poor and low-income families that holds political officials accountable, because a key word in COPS's vocabulary is "accountability." When officials make promises, COPS works to see that promises are kept.

A city that once had a single power center — the Chamber of Commerce — today has a counter balance. The result, for me, as a public official, is that there is a better equilibrium in the decision-making process than would be possible otherwise.

Who would have thought it was possible in San Antonio that the president of COPS, Helen Ayala, would co-chair with the chairman of the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, a committee to promote passage of a city-wide, $100 million bond issue? Ms. Ayala remembers as a child walking to school through flooded, unpaved streets and years later sending her own children through similar muddy roadways. "All of this," she says, "before COPS did something about it." The committee successfully promoted a bond issue in 1985 — with the support of 66 percent of the voters — favoring a 14 percent increase in property taxes. And this at a time when the national sentiment was opposed to increases in taxes and in favor of cuts in public expenditures.

One further word before I conclude this section. I have frequently referred to COPS as a organizaton. "COPS did this. COPS did that." I do not want to leave the impression that COPS is a "thing." COPS is about people, not things. That characteristic is as important, even more so, than all the gains that have been achieved.

At the heart of COPS is the belief that individuals are more important than programs, power, or politics. COPS's investment in the development of people is reflected in its dedication to the policy of the empowerment of people.

COPS instills in its members belief in the notion that average human beings can be trusted to know what is good for themselves and for the greater community. COPS embodies a strong theme in Catholic social teaching recently reaffirmed by Pope John Paul II: "People must be the focus of all that is done to improve the conditions of life. People must be active agents, not passive recipients, in any true development process."

In COPS, that is what happens. As people are trained to experience empowerment and coached in the exercise of power, they enjoy a liberating growth in their own sense of self-esteem.

What are the implications of this San Antonio experience for the nation at large? In the next several decades, I believe, some of the phenomena that San Antonio experienced in microcosm will be felt nationwide. They merit attention.

The first of these involves economics. The dominant factors that will place severe stress on the nation's social and political structures for the rest of this century will be economic. We are already seeing a dramatic shift in the nation's economic base. Our once strong industrial base is shrinking and is being replaced by service-oriented businesses.

The millions of industrial-sector jobs lost overseas had workers who were earning well over $10 per hour; wages in the new service jobs pay less than half that amount. The pinch resulting from this phenomenon will be felt by the middle-class sector, and, in my judgment, polarization among classes will increasingly set in.

Another strain on the nation's political economy will be reflected in education. We know that the educational opportunities are unequally distributed to children of poor and low-income families as compared to children of higher-income families. The school system is scarcely able to teach the three R's to children in poor neighborhoods in central cities and many rural areas. We have not begun to prepare these young

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people in the three C's demanded by technology: how to calculate, compute, and communicate in the language of computers. The sharp differences in the income levels of the technological literates and those who are illiterate will be a further driving force in the trend toward polarization.

Another new dynamic that places severe stress on the nation's political structures is the changing demographic patterns. Today minorities not only *live* in central cities, they govern many of them. Mayors of some major cities are black or Hispanic. The nation's Hispanic population has grown significantly, as has the number of Asians. A notable example: the state of California in 1940 was 80 percent white; by the year 2000 it is projected that there will be no definable majority among whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. The political dialogue in such a society is dramatically different than when a single ethnic or racial group is the dominant majority.

The challenges posed by these projections are enormous. As the class gap widens, are we going to allow ourselves to become a society in which those who "have" govern absolutely, and those who "don't have" are relegated to peon-status, poor and powerless? If there are no processes by which the victims of this widening social gap are empowered to participate in the decisions that affect their lives, I fear that America in the next century will be radically different from the one we love so much today.

Innovative political restructuring, programs that empower the poor, and ways to improve the quality of political dialogue must become part of our national experience over the next several decades. A system of balances between economic interests and people interests must be a part of that process. The growing diversity in the racial and ethnic makeup of our population must be seen not as a threat but as a resource in the further development of our political economy.

Finally, a comment on the value of investing in human capital. This country has never gone wrong when it has invested in its people. One example: The darkest moment in the country's history was the Civil War; the country was tearing itself apart. And yet in 1862 the Congress passed a remarkable, innovative piece of legislation that set up the land-grant college system. In effect, the Congress said that while there was uncertainty about the outcome of the war, one thing was clear: the country would need engineers to build the roads and dams, teachers to help people become literate, experts to develop farms and build market systems. They were acting on faith in the people. We must be as innovative.

Based on my own personal experience, I am convinced that the empowerment of the poor is not a threat to the strength of our society. I believe that a nation with a large sector of poor and powerless people is an unhealthy society. I believe that to empower the poor is consistent with our democratic traditions, is central to our biblical heritage, and is in our nation's best long-term self-interest.

HALF-TIME AT THE WAKE

WORKING UNDER A DEADLINE

DAVID BUTLER

My mother died shortly after dawn on St. Valentine's day, halfway through February, in what in Boston at least felt like the dead of winter. I was not with her. There had been warning phone calls. But I was working on a magazine assignment in Washington, D.C., where I lived at that time. I was also awaiting the publication of my first book, and broke.

The final call, another warning, from my sister, came at six in the morning. I was on a plane to Boston a little more than an hour later.

DAVID BUTLER *is the author of* The Fall of Saigon *(Simon & Schuster), and previously served as NBC Radio's Saigon correspondent. He currently lives in Thailand where he is working on a novel.*
©1988 by David Butler.

Someone would meet me at the airport, Beth said. There was no one waiting. I called the hospital and asked for the intensive care unit. After I identified myself, the nurse said: "Your mother passed away about an hour ago. I'm sorry."

"Thank you," I said. As I hung up, my younger brother appeared in the distance in the baggage-claim area. "I know," I said.

Two days later, my father in his grief did an uncharacteristic thing: he prevailed upon his four children to go to confession so that we could receive Communion at the funeral Mass.

We were — are — four strong-willed adults. My older brother, Michael, who was forty-five, happened to be in the U.S. during a period in his life when he was usually at an ashram north of Bombay. He was a follower of the guru Baba Muktananda and then, when Muktananda died, of the strikingly attractive young Indian woman — she bears a strong re-

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semblance to Joan Baez — Muktananda appointed as his successor. I am two years younger than Michael, and was eager for my book to be published in large part because I knew it would give me the wherewithal to return to Bangkok.

The line then gets more conventional. My younger brother, Paul, then thirty-nine, is a surgeon with a wife and three children. The youngest, Beth, is a Boston lawyer.

Paul and Beth may have received Communion now and then through the last fifteen years or so. I had not done so in many years, and I don't think Michael had either.

"It's not like the old days, " my father said that morning. "They don't call it confession anymore. It's the sacrament of reconciliation. You go in and talk with the priest, face-to-face if you wish. A general admission of sins, and the forgiveness. And this man, Father Broyles, is terrific. You'll like him, David. He was a Navy chaplain for years and years."

My father called the rectory. Yes, we would be received that afternoon, after the 1:00 to 3:00 P.M. "visiting hours."

The first death in a scattered family carries some discoveries. I was somewhat surprised when my father very mildly corrected me for referring to the day's afternoon and evening sessions at the funeral home as wakes.

At four that afternoon, filing into the rectory, I lingered behind with Beth and said, "This is a mistake. Dad isn't himself. It isn't going to work."

From what my father had said, I had allowed myself to imagine that I was wrong, that it all could be done in generalities at the large conference table where we briefly sat. No luck. After very brief pleasantries and condolences indeed, Father Broyles, as I am calling him, led us back outdoors and across a short piece of gravel to the church and a glassed-in area to the side of the altar that was used at Mass by parents with small children.

"I'm going first," I said to Michael. "I'll be quick." He appeared to be a little startled at the assertion of authority.

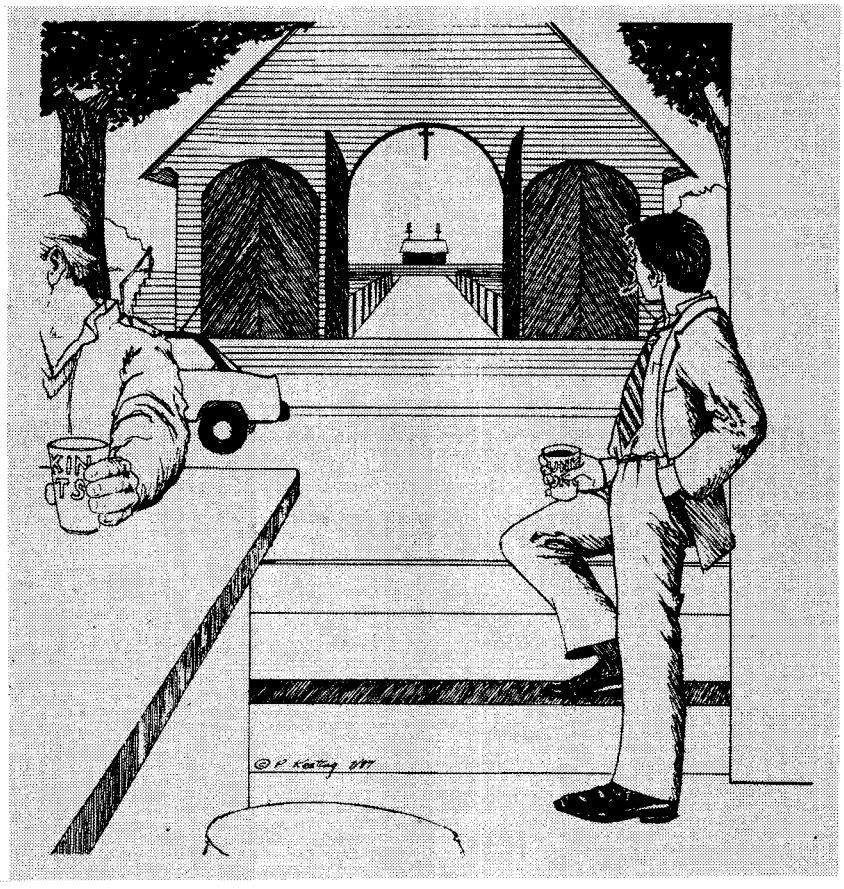
Father Broyles started ahead of me into a conventional confessional box as the rest of the family, including Paul's wife, Janet, who is a Protestant, settled into pews.

"Couldn't we just talk?" I asked.

"Of course," Father Broyles said, and opened the door to a small windowless room next to the confessional.

"Father, I'll be honest, of course, and brief," I said. "I would very much like to receive Communion on Monday, for my father's sake. And I think I could do it without feeling like a hypocrite. I'm . . . searching. I'm looking. But at the moment I don't believe in the divinity of Christ. I wish I did, of course. It would make life easier."

Father Broyles had the face of a man who had spent his fair share of time in officers' clubs here and there around the world, but hadn't been beaten by them. He looked competent and trim and a little rugged, like some men who spend twenty years in the Navy.



"Where are you living?" Father Broyles asked.

"In Washington. I have just finished writing a book. I'm tied up there for a few more months. Then I'll be going back to Asia."

"I wish you were here. We need to talk. . . ."

"Yes," I said. "I agree. I wish we could. I wish I'd had a Jesuit education, so that there were a little more intellectual force in this. But my mother's funeral is the day after tomorrow."

"I can't. . . ."

"I used to think I really *would* be a hypocrite if I received the sacrament," I said. "But I *am* looking. And my father. . . ."

"My son, I get this all the time from young people who don't believe but want to get married in the church to please their parents," Father Broyles said. "I can't administer the sacrament to please your father."

"Fine," I said. "Thanks, Father. I do wish we could talk. But I've got to get back to Washington. I've got a magazine assignment with a deadline."

My father and Michael sat in one pew. Paul and Janet sat behind them, and Beth right behind them in a third. Now Michael moved past me toward the little room. I leaned over to Beth and said, "I'll be back in twenty minutes or so," and then hurried out into the low clear light of the February late-afternoon.

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Moment by moment, roiling anxiety was ratcheting up in my chest. I'd be the only one. Five or six of us in the front pew to the right of the casket, all the relatives in trenches behind us, watching as my father and Michael and Paul and Beth filed out for Communion, I kneeling there with a scarlet S for sinner glowing in neon on the back of my beautiful gray suit jacket.

I had been reasonably honest. Replaying the conversation, I was surprised — no, had been surprised as the words came out — that I had been so eager to establish my intellectual credentials with the mention of the book. I was aware when I used the word "sacrament" that I was doing so for effect, a mild effect. And I was not really quite so eager to believe in the divinity of Christ as I had claimed. But if I had been marginally dishonest it was to achieve the goal of being able to receive the wafer. It was true: I would not feel like a hypocrite. Night after night before the writing sessions through the last two years I had stood before my large work table in a tiny apartment on Sixteenth Street, ten blocks north of the White House, engaged in something very close to prayer.

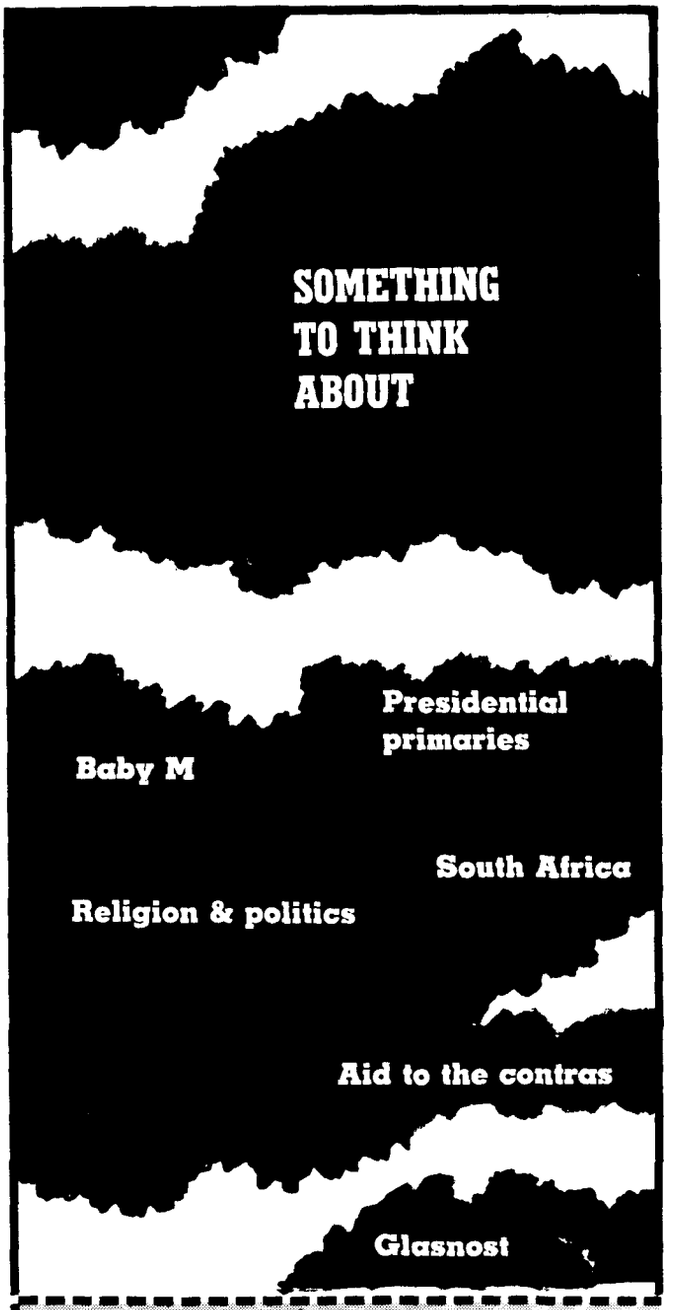
There had been no edge in anything I had said. In the little room, I had felt no anger toward the priest. As I drank tasteless coffee from a paper cup in a Dunkin' Donuts across the street from the church, the anger started to come. But it was overwhelmed by the dread of the shame I was going to bring on myself and the family at the Mass two days later.

An uncle — one of my mother's several brothers — would celebrate the Mass. I wondered what I would do if Father Broyles did not assist. Could I risk approaching the rail? Or would Father Broyles have spoken to the visiting uncle first: "An interesting family. By the way, the second one, the very thin boy; he can't receive Communion." (I realize now that no priest would do such a thing; emotion had taken over.)

My hands were shaking as I stubbed out a cigarette, took a last sip of the wretched coffee.

I slipped into the pew that Beth had left for her confession, and tapped Janet on the shoulder of her winter coat. When she turned, I pointed to myself and made the thumbs-down gesture. Janet smiled slightly, pointed to Paul and made the same gesture. "Thank God," I whispered.

Beth passed. But Michael had been refused for believing in too many gods, and Paul had confessed to an inability quite yet to wholly accept the transubstantiation of Christ, as well as his ascent into heaven in physical form. Paul was a surgeon; even more than priests, he was familiar with corpses. And so, on Monday morning my father and sister received the sacrament while the rest of the congregation looked at the broad-shouldered backs of the mystic, the doubter, and the scrupulous saint, all shamed. "I don't understand it," my father had said as he drove us home from the failed confessions, the four of us exploding with the laughter of relief: "As far as I'm concerned you're all good people."



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My mother had lived for a little more than three years after having been diagnosed as having inoperable lung cancer. I suspect that much of the grieving had gone on quietly, almost subconsciously, during the illness. In any case, when it became clear that my father was going to get through the several sessions of "visiting hours" and all the other gatherings in those days without his composure breaking, I took it as a cue to do likewise.

"I think I've figured it out," Beth whispered to me one evening in the kitchen. "He thinks we should act like the Kennedys." The remark revived an old, almost forgotten but sharp identification with Robert F. Kennedy, who was for most of his life another middle brother of three. "Right," I said to myself: "Just like Bobby when they buried Jack. Not a bloody tear."

Michael cried almost soundlessly through parts of the service, and when our uncle spoke especially. But not a tear from me. Not then. Not since.

And I don't know what to make of that.

AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

THE CATHOLIC LEGACY & ABORTION

READERS RESPOND TO THE MAGUIRE-BURTCHAELL DEBATE

Who's left out?

Dayton, Ohio

To the Editors: In "The Catholic Legacy and Abortion: A Debate" [November 20], spoken of as "a very Catholic and very theological debate," one is more than a little surprised that the first participant never refers to Christ and scolds the other participant for doing so. A secular historian could have done what Daniel C. Maguire accomplished. James T. Burtchaell, C.S.C., on the other hand, discerned that the example and teachings of Christ are fundamental to the whole discussion, a position I support, although I must honestly admit I am neither philosopher nor theologian — God be praised!

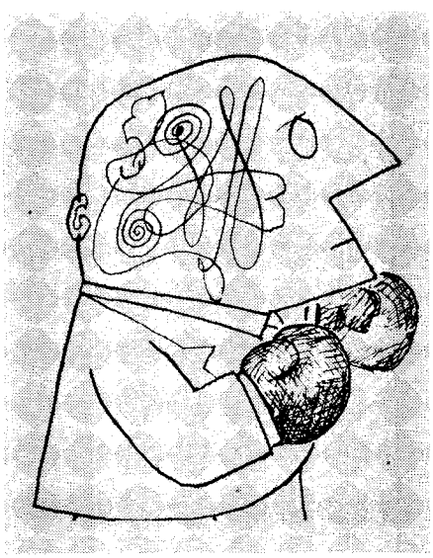
CHARLES J. LEES, S.M.

Still more points

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: I suppose that as far as the matter of political responses to the problem of abortion goes, I would agree with Daniel Maguire — and, for that matter, Mario Cuomo — that since people who can afford abortions always have and always will procure them no matter what the law says, it makes most sense not to try to change the law but rather to work to establish a social order that protects mothers and welcomes children so that women are not driven in desperation to abort the children they want.

But why does Maguire insist that no decision on the issue can be valid until more women investigate it theologically? Aren't all those women who belong to pro-life groups theologizing, so to speak, with their feet? Surely to see them merely as brainwashed victims of a patriarchal cleregy is to denigrate them far more than someone sensitive to sexism should be willing to do.



I would agree that Father Burtchaell's rhetoric, as Maguire reports it, gets a bit much. It is, however, not just that prophets are disposed to deliver jeremiads. He would seem to be trying to follow the Christian doctrine of loving the sinner and hating the sin. When Christ saves the woman taken in adultery — the Gospel paradigm for making this most difficult distinction — he reestablishes her as a fit object for compassion by demonstrating that in nothing is she so human as in sinning. But then he says to her not, "It's okay, honey. I know you didn't intend anything very bad," but rather "Go and sin no more."

The victim presents rhetorical problems, too, for it is no easier to hate that abstract, sin, than it is to love that abstract, virtue. The Middle Ages had a satisfying rhetorical solution, allegory, which incarnates the abstract, and in doing so, makes it much easier to separate the sinner from the sin. For instance, Sloth in *Piers Plowman* is so thoroughly repellent that it is not hard at all to pity the poor slothful one encumbered with such an incubus. But Burtchaell speaks now, and allegory falls uncomfortably on twentieth-century ears.

Professor Maguire's argument about the unborn child as material aggressor I

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think makes sense. One can, for instance, see that a woman impregnated during a rape could see the child she carries as merely an extension of the assault she has endured, though she need not. But the question of "ensoulment" seems unpersuasive. Thomas did say we do not know precisely when the soul enters the body, but he also said, with Aristotle, that what lives, grows, and that that growth is determined and directed by its form, the soul.

The whole business of calling the unborn a fetus seems to me disingenuous. . . . What most women who abort want to dispose of is the child, and it is the child that most advocates of abortion object to, too. We are to pity that woebegone teenager in the Planned Parenthood ad not because she carries a fertilized egg but because that egg will become a child. Thus using all those wormy names like "zygote" and "blastocyst" is merely allegorizing in reverse. Rather than incarnating the abstract to make it subject to an emotional response, those terms objectify the victim and do so in such an obvious way that their use suggests that people justifying abortion as a moral choice are not quite so certain as they say they are that what they recommend is right.

MARIAN BURKHART

Let's look at the 'vital signs'

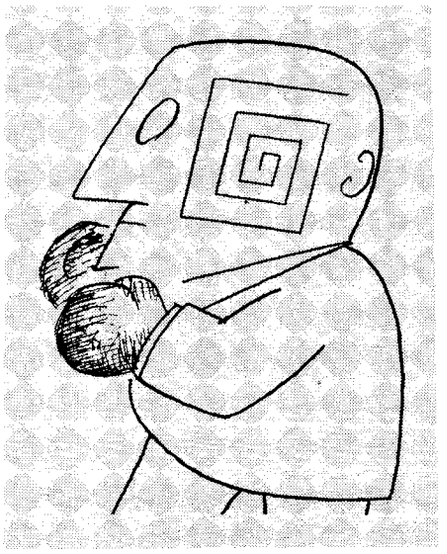
Silver Spring, Md.

To the Editors: Regrettably, your lengthy report of the Maguire-Burtchaell debate on abortion did little to advance even a partial solution to this national debacle. It might have been more fruitful had the debate begun with a definition of "abortion." We would define it as *the termination of pregnancy in a human being which is willfully, directly,* and *artificially induced.* The operative word is *human.* It would be per se unreasonable to contend that potential human life *is* in fact human life. The crux of the abortion dilemma then becomes a question of precisely when *human* life can be said to begin.

The Vatican maintains that human life begins at the moment of conception. Jews hold that human life begins when more than half of the baby has emerged from the womb. Muslims contend that human life begins forty days after conception. The three great monotheistic religions thus hold three distinct beliefs. The Bible (I Cor. 15:46) notes only that, "the spiritual was not first; first came the natural and after that the spiritual." Little wonder then that abortion is an issue about which conscientious people may reasonably disagree.

In 1973 the Supreme Court ruled with respect to pregnant women that the rights of the mother prevail at first, then the interests of the state enter the equation, and finally, the interests of the state completely outweigh the rights of the mother. This graduated proscription regarding abortion reflects an anthropological view of *successive animation* that dates at least from Aristotle. The interest of the state arises from its inherent duty to safeguard all *human* life. As the 1987 Vatican declaration on bioethics observed, the inviolable right to life of every *human* individual is a constitutive element of civil society and its order which merits the intervention of political and legislative authorities.

For Catholics the *human* being comprises body *and* soul. St. John (Jn. 6:63) tells us that, "It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh has nothing to offer." St. Thomas Aquinas (*ST*-I-118, 1-3) concluded that the capabilities of rational thought and voluntary decision are the *essence of humanity.* The church concedes that some of its documents entertain the view of delayed animation, and that penalties were once conditioned according to whether the subject was animated. Interestingly, the latter distinction was eliminated as recently as 1869 by Pope Pius IX *"acting according with the strong weight of (then) current scientific and philosophical analyses of human development."*



Modern neurological science now places the "vital signs" (e.g., electrical activity) indicating a functioning brain at eight weeks. Cessation of electrical activity in the brain is increasingly recognized as the most positive indication of death — the *end* of human life. It would seem equally logical to recognize brain activity (the brain being the seat of the intellect and will) as the *beginning* of *human* life. Let those who would dismiss these notions not forget Pope Pius IX's earlier noted paean to scientific progress as a proper source of relevant enlightenment. Moreover, official government statistics indicate that stipulating an eight-week limit beyond which abortion would be proscribed would effectively *reduce abortions by a laudable 50 percent.* Surely, such a reduction in the current carnage has substantial merit.

If ever we are to have any influence on curtailing excessively promiscuous abortion, we must adopt arguments based upon those unique attributes of humanity which are comprehensible to both believers and non-believers. Our church may not be a democracy, but our nation is.

JACK WRIGHT

Danger zone

Cincinnati, Ohio

To the Editors: The tremendous and troubling fact that emerges from the Maguire-Burtchaell exchange is that

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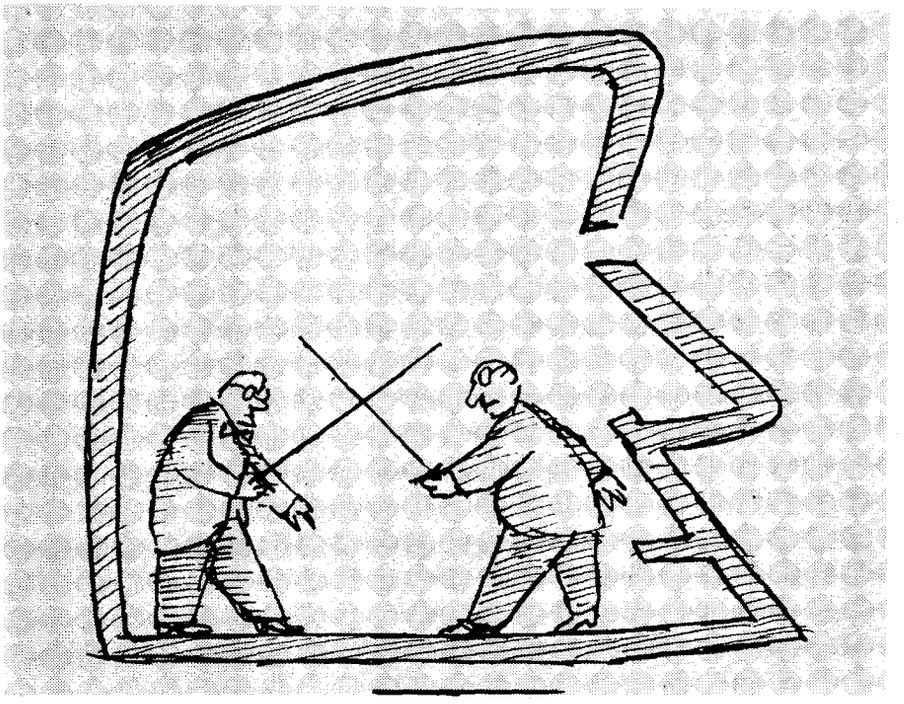
Burtchaell's arguments are quite as dangerous as anything the pro-abortion side has come up with.

I say that, I hasten to add, as someone completely on Burtchaell's own side of the argument — that is, as someone wholly convinced that abortion is the taking of innocent life and tortured by my inability to make non-Catholic friends see the point of that conviction.

The best thing about *Commonweal's* having been so generous with its space is that Burtchaell is pushed to the point where he gets smoked out. All his arguments really do boil down to what he is pleased, in his final contribution, to call "prophetic insight": you know abortion is murder on the same grounds, as having seen a saint, you know what sainthood is (as opposed to having some abstract list of saintly qualities the candidate fits), etc. (This, for the record, is Burtchaell's own example.) The point is that you *know* in an intuitive or pre-rational way that abortion is wrong, you know this in part because (things get a bit circular here) other people like you have previously known it in just the same way, and collectively the people who know things in this way have a right to assume that the intuition comes straight from God.

The answer to this shouldn't need stating at this point in our sad century, but here it is. Neither Christianity nor Catholicism has any monopoly on such moments of prophetic insight. It is entirely possible for someone to wake up one day and sincerely and honestly and really "hear," for instance, the voice of the angel Gabriel telling him that it's time to depart from Mecca and move on to Yathrib. It is entirely possible for someone to "see," as Nietzsche did, that Christianity is a loathsome ethical ruse through which the weak take a disguised revenge on their natural masters. It is entirely possible for a young member of the *Hitlerjugend*, burning with a conviction both passionate and utterly sincere, to see that Jews are the lice of a civilization that won't be cleansed until the last Jew is eliminated.

The role of rational argument in theology is going to be debated for as long as theology exists, but surely we can get



some sort of preliminary agreement about its relations to such instances of "prophetic insight." What it *means* to live in a fallen world is that God has given us absolutely no way to check up on the sincerity of someone's conviction that he or she has direct access to moral truth, and that, even if we could, sincerity is no measure of its being a moral truth. Muhammad, Nietzsche, the Hitler Youth, and Father Burtchaell might all be equally and passionately convinced that what they "see" is a blinding truth, and in all such cases there may be a body of doctrine and the testimony of other, equally passionate, believers to support them in that conviction, and yet their conviction is worth, precisely, nothing at all. In such cases rational argument is, quite literally, all God has given us to go on, and we refuse the gift at our peril.

WILLIAM C. DOWLING

Caught in the personhood trap

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: A considerable percentage (one-eleventh) of Maguire's argument is that when Burtchaell does not yield his principles out of sympathy for those with antithetical opinions, he is being "ecumenically insensitive." Maguire then cites those churches which approve of abortions: Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, the Synod of the United Church of Christ, Friends, Episcopalians, and "a number of Jewish groups."

All but one of these churches also have antithetical opinions on the Eucharist, and do not believe in the consecration of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus. By his own reasoning, Maguire must therefore expect Burtchaell to be sympathetic to this heresy as well.

The balance of Maguire's argument I find no less blindsided. He has fallen into the pit prepared for him by Planned Parenthood when he declares the dividing line between life and death to be determined by personhood. According to which, a non-person has no title to life. You remember where you've heard that before.

There is, however, a universally satisfactory definition of a "human being" —a more generic, more basic term philosophically. And this leads me to posit this proposition to Maguire and the abor-

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tionists, a proposition I believe to be unarguable: Each abortion requires the extinction of a human life.

WILLIAM TALBOT
Editor, Samuel French, Inc.

False advertising

Los Angeles, Calif.

To the Editors: What *Commonweal* billed as a "heavyweight bout" between two highly credentialed theologians turned lightweight at the start when Daniel Maguire began his presentation with a charge of sexism against those who oppose abortion: . . .

The real issues do not derive from women's rights; they come from *human* rights. The fact that only women can become pregnant opens a doorway that Maguire in good conscience should not have entered. The victims of abortion after all are both male and female. Also, it is often the *father* who is pressuring the reluctant mother to have an abortion.

Moreover, the implication that the abortion issue involves a battle between the sexes is belied by the actual facts. From more than twenty-seven years of experience I know that the active pro-life movement has been and still is led and supported primarily by women. Women do most of the work; men tend to hold titles. Without women, there would be no viable anti-abortion movement. Could it be that this is because only women can become *mothers*?

. . . A statement of the real issue can be made in simple terms: Are we ever permitted deliberately to kill an innocent existing human life for reasons of policy or convenience, regardless of elusive side issues of "ensoulment" or "personhood" which are sometimes used to avoid the real problem?

Maguire goes on to assert: "By saying that all abortions are immoral, a stinging judgment is delivered on one or two million American women and forty to fifty million worldwide who decide each year for abortion."

No anti-abortionist that I ever knew, and I have known many, would dare pass judgment on a woman who has submitted to an abortion. I have never been subjected to the pressures of a mother with a seriously unwanted pregnancy. No one has a right to pass judgment on *her;* but we can pass judgment on what she *did* or what she might contemplate doing.

Maguire then makes it worse. He says that the "conservative" "absolutist" position allows only for three judgments of "these women." They are "ignorant," "evil," or "insane." This list of choices is amazing. Some time in his life Maguire must have done something wrong that even he would consider sinful. If not, he is eligible to join a rather select few earthlings in heaven; only two that I know of. By his own assertion Maguire must be either evil, ignorant, or insane. While I have never met him, I assume that Maguire is none of the above, just like most of the women who have consented to an abortion.

Maguire finds his opponent "ecumenically insensitive." Would Maguire shut off debate on capital punishment by asserting that the anti's are "ecumenically insensitive"? How about atomic warfare, justice, the economy, racial relationships? Ecumenism is one of the most valuable religious developments in recent years. But should we be "ecumenical" at the expense of what we believe to be basic values? If ecumenism requires abortion and abortion involves killing, ecumenism to this extent becomes irrelevant, although it can find surprising areas of agreement.

Consider some of Maguire's characterizations of his opponent: "Burtchaell's knowledge of moral theology is arrested at the level of his old seminary textbook." Maguire accuses his opponent of "unscholarly bombast," "illiteracy in moral theology," using an "empirically bereft analysis," and "decontextualized exegetical wizardry" [Wow!]; of displaying "invidious talent" and of using analogies that are "simply funny in an obnoxious sort of way."

Both theologians rely too much on history. When the resolution of a moral issue requires a knowledge of physical facts, the relevance of ancient writing is limited to basic principles. The old writings cited by both sides were by men who did not have the faintest idea of what goes on in the womb of a pregnant woman. There was no science of embryology.

I have been told by those who know him that Burtchaell can be explosive towards those who disagree with him. If so, he has shown remarkable restraint. Possibly my own contribution is sufficiently explosive.

WALTER R. TRINKAUS
Professor Emeritus
Loyola Law School

Experience does count

Minot, N. Dak.

To the Editors: Many good points were made — and scored — in the abortion debate in your November 20 issue. Yet after reading, underlining, rereading, and pondering the lengthy discussion, I was not moved as I was by Ruth Ames Gelber's letter on sexuality and abortion in the same issue.

In fact, neither debater, Maguire nor Burtchaell, seemed to move or be moved by the other. In their cerebral, tightly argued exchange, neither allowed much room for reconciliation, resolution. And resolution of any issue, it seems, results only through open, personal statements such as Gelber's.

In my personal life and in my work as a psychotherapist, I've encountered persons who have been moved by their experiences and who have rethought, and in some cases modified, their views. These persons, in turn, may move others, whether family members, friends, or therapists.

I've known those who have modified their militant pro-choice views to better appreciate the awfulness of abortion, the pain, the death. And I've known those who have softened their hard-line pro-life stance of condemning not only abortion but any person involved in any way with it.

One woman, in particular, in her thirties, married, with three children, struggling for years with depression, unexpectedly pregnant, found herself think-

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ing the unthinkable for her, abortion. Shaken that she, "a good Christian," considered what she did, even though she did choose to have her fourth child, she resolved never again to judge those who consider or choose abortion.

Her testimony, like Gelber's, differs from Maguire's and Burtchaell's. She and Gelber more clearly show the capacity to be positively moved by their circumstances and experiences — or, if you will, by the spirit — and that, it seems, makes all the difference.

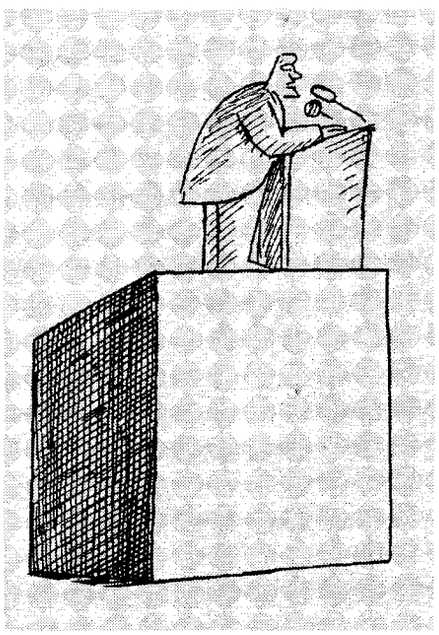
JIM LEIN

Why new developments change the debate

Granger, Ind.

To the Editors: After the Maguire-Burtchaell debate, which I attended last February 9, I wrote to the Notre Dame student paper, the *Observer*. My comments appeared Feb. 18, 1987: "The debate on abortion was doubly disappointing. Neither Professor Maguire nor Burtchaell discussed the topic at issue: Recent developments and reflection provide authentic reasons to reconsider the virtually total Christian (sic) disapproval of abortion. The positions they took could have been taken any time in the last thousand years. But there actually are recent developments that affect our view of abortion.

"On the one side, modern biology makes it clear that a new human individual begins life when the genetic material of sperm and ovum fuse about twenty hours after the sperm has penetrated the ovum. This fact alone may not settle the moral question of abortion, but it makes ridiculous using Aristotle's opinions as to when human life begins, as well as the Supreme Court's profession of ignorance on the subject.



"On the other side of the argument, the very latest developments in the technique of abortion change it from direct killing to indirect killing, and in some cases, from indirect killing to not killing at all. This changes both our way of doing abortion and our way of viewing abortion. The newest method of abortion, still being tested in other countries, involves a new anti-steroid drug RU486. A woman takes the drug as soon as she suspects she has missed a period and it induces a menstrual flow, whether she is pregnant or not. If a fertilized ovum is present (and she will never know) it is washed out intact by the flow and dies from lack of sustenance, not from being torn to pieces by suction.

"Other drugs of the prostaglandin class, still being investigated, could potentially expel older fetuses in good condition. Dramatic breakthroughs in premature infant care, such as use of germfree isolators and artificial placentas, could then carry them to term. In such cases abortion would not be killing at all, and a fetus would die only if doubly rejected, by its mother and by the community.

"Changing abortion from direct killing to indirect killing changes the argument against it from the proscription of murder to the prescription of obligatory maternal care. The obligation to care for the unborn life now becomes as prescriptive as two of the other obligations Burtchaell listed as being uniquely Christian in the generosity they demand of us. He listed love of the poor, the enemy, and the spouse.

"But the official church has been far from absolute in prescribing what we have to do for the poor, even when lives are at stake. The cost of a gourmet meal, converted to antibiotics or vaccines for a Central American dispensary, could probably save at least one life. The cost of a year's tuition, if sent to an African bush hospital, could undoubtedly save some lives, perhaps dozens.

"Neither has the official church presented the love of enemies in absolute terms. While recommending nonviolence, especially to poor peasants with leftist tendencies, the church allows us to do our enemies in, even by direct killing, under some circumstances. It does not spell out how much we must sacrifice to avoid war with the enemy. If we took all the time we spend watching sports and used it for actions to reverse the nuclear arms race, we could save hundreds of millions from destruction by accidental nuclear war, fast approaching 100 percent probability. While alerting us to our obligation to peace-making, the church has not specified its demands on our time.

"Only in the case of a pregnant woman does the official church prescribe an absolute obligation. This is partly because of the understanding that she took the obligation on herself by the act of intercourse. But that is clearly not the case in rape or incest, and that is why many people who otherwise oppose abortion would allow it in such cases. But there are many other cases of unfreedom, and situations in which the extent and risks of the obligation could not have been foreseen.

"The above seem to be authentic reasons, resulting from recent developments, for reconsidering the extent of the official Catholic ban on abortions, and for giving theologians the right, even the duty, to discuss it. But whatever happens or doesn't happen to the official ban, it must be made clear to Catholics that the ban is neither revelation nor infallible. On this point I am sure that both the debaters agree.

"The church does not make moral

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law, and its interpretations of natural law are no better than its understanding of nature. Catholics can and must make up their own consciences on the matter, giving long and respectful consideration to the specifics of the official church's position, but also to their own experience and understanding. What we must hold onto is the essential part of the Catholic tradition, a generous response to the needs of others, even the least of His sisters and brothers."

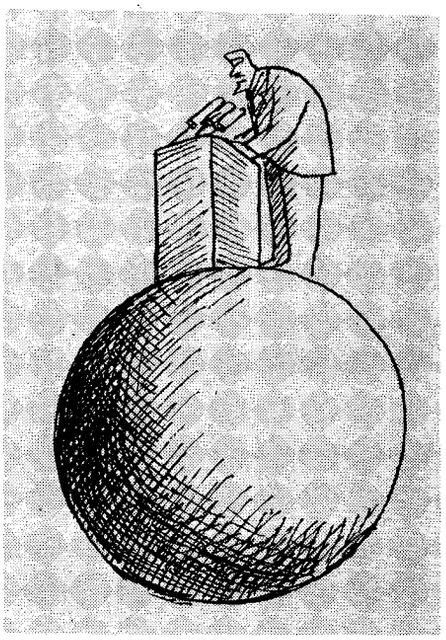
JULIAN PLEASANTS
Assoc. Professor Emeritus
University of Notre Dame

Method madness

Rockville, Md.

To the Editors: For someone who stresses academic method, Daniel Maguire shows a striking ability to ignore some major sources and quote selectively from others.

Why does he restrict his discussion of the Scriptures on abortion to Exodus 21:22? How about Amos 1:13-15 ("For three crimes of the Ammonites, and for four, I will not revoke my word; because they ripped open expectant mothers in Gilead, while extending their territory . . . Their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes with him, says the Lord.")?



Has Maguire nothing to say about Psalm 71:6; Psalm 139:13-15; Isaiah 45:9-12; Isaiah 49:1; Isaiah 49:15-16; Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:15 and 1:41-44; Luke 18:15-17; John 16:21; Galatians 1:15?

Maguire quotes Tertullian as apparently approving craniotomy when the mother's life is at stake, but manages to skip Tertullian's strong condemnation of abortion elsewhere. He fails to mention that Augustine opposed abortion at any stage, despite his views on delayed ensoulment. He also skips over condemnations of abortion by Basil the Great, Ambrose, Jerome, and John Chrysostom.

Maguire ignores the Protestant and Jewish witness against abortion. Until recent decades, Protestant and Jewish authorities generally opposed abortion except to save a mother's life. In his *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses,* John Calvin wrote that the fetus "is already a human being" and that "it is almost a monstrous crime to rob it of the life which it has not yet begun to enjoy."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer apparently viewed the ensoulment/personhood debate as irrelevant. "The simple fact is," he wrote in *Ethics,* "that God certainly intended to create a human being and that this nascent human being has been deliberately deprived of his life. And that is nothing but murder." (Citing extreme destitution and misery, however, he said that "the guilt may often lie rather with the community than with the individual.")

Many Protestants today are still committed to the pro-life tradition. But Maguire ignores their witness. He also ignores the comments of Jewish authorities such as Immanuel Jakobovits, David Novak, and Seymour Siegel. He makes a narrow appeal to ecumenical responsibility, that is, to those Protestants and Jews who agree with his position.

Maguire decries sexism and stresses "the necessity of listening to women on abortion in a systematic way." Yet he apparently feels no need to listen to pro-life feminists such as Sidney Callahan, Susan Carpenter-McMillan, Pam Cira, Daphne de Jong, and Rachel MacNair, who make a strong and eloquent case against abortion.

Though he criticizes militarism, Maguire does not respond to those who see a close connection between war and abortion: Daniel Berrigan, Juli Loesch, Jo McGowan, Gordon Zahn, and many others. If Maguire is going to talk about *sensus fidelium,* he cannot fairly restrict it to those outside the hierarchy who agree with him.

Space limits prevent an adequate reply to Maguire's cheap shots about Catholics during the Holocaust and the civil rights movement.

MARY MEEHAN

The rights question

Park Ridge, Ill.

To the Editors: Maguire, in citing historical examples wherein Catholic theologians condone abortion, states the issue involved as a choice between the life of the mother and that of the child. To abort to save the mother was merely a choice of lesser evils.

Abortion was given a new theology with the concept of "rights." Those who are pro-choice maintain that it is the "right" of the mother to dispose of an "unwanted fetus." This concept, that a fetus is the property of the mother without the basic right to life, is the same principle used in the Dred Scott decision to justify slavery. Since a slave was chattel without rights of personage, the contract by which a slave was purchased was held to be valid. Only when the slave was conceived as a person with inherent rights, was Dred Scott overturned.

Judge Blackmun indicated that he was moved by compassion for the victims of back alley abortions. If punitive measures against doctors performing abortions were removed, it would be a legitimate compromise. But to hold that abortion is a "right" is an abomination.

November 20 is an excellent issue. I hope Marquette uses it in their school of "theology."

EDWARD F.HALPIN

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SCREEN

STONED ON GREED

DOUGLAS & SHEEN ON WALL STREET

Wall Street is mediocre by one standard, good by another. Compared to director/writer Oliver Stone's previous films, *Salvador* and *Platoon*, it disappoints with hokeyness, uneven development, and some weak characterizations. But unlike most films about business, *Wall Street* is sharply observant.

Stone shapes *Wall Street* to counteract the simplistic ideological views of both right and left about the business world. There is none of the saccharin, trendy worship of materialism seen in 1987 films like *The Secret of My Sucess* and *Baby Boom*, or in television series like *Dallas* and *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*. Nor do we see the trite stereotypes of corrupt businessmen. Stone dedicates the film to his father, a stockbroker and a man who frequently complained to his son about the monotonous media caricatures of greedy tycoons.

Wall Street does portray one giant, demonic case of corruption in the speculator Gordon Gekko, played by Michael Douglas and modeled on Ivan Boesky, the Wall Street financier recently convicted of insider trading. There are also "good" businessmen (principally Hal Holbrook) and a loyal airline employee (Martin Sheen). Good and evil angels fight for the soul of the genial but ambitious young stockbroker aptly named "Bud." (Charlie Sheen, lead in *Platoon*, here plays the fictional son of his real father, Martin Sheen.)

When the older Sheen mentions his $47,000 salary as an airline maintenance manager, the younger Sheen admonishes: "Dad, there's no noblity in poverty anymore." Bud wants to be a "player," one of the few that really matter on "the Street." When his father inadvertently passes on inside information about the airline business, Bud grabs his chance.

In pursuing his dreams, Bud becomes a tool not only of Douglas but of the current vogue for making big money fast, the theme of the story. Douglas ("I create nothing, I own nothing") increases his wealth through paper manipulations (liquidations, takeovers, threats of takeover, etc.) rather than creating real wealth (products for use). In the film's focus on the recent boom (pre-October 19), Stone seems a prophet on profit: when he started this project early in 1986, the current wave of insider scandals was barely in sight. Stone's shrewdness in this marketplace of ideas about the marketplace is enlivened by strong moral concern. As with *Platoon*, Stone wants viewers to think about complex moral issues— here, unethical methods of profitmaking. Unfortunately, his thinking does not always work out dramatically.

The film's populist (but not anti-capitalist) moral is too pointed; it is certainly one scene (and camera pan) too long; and the drama of good against evil is labored and uneven. Douglas is too powerful to allow a fair contest, and neither Holbrook nor Martin Sheen can hold a candle to his blithe dark spirit. Holbrook too often falls back on folksy, Mark Twainish gestures, and scenes between the two Sheens are completely lame.

Why is "good" so weak here? "Good" is always difficult to make dramatically convincing. And given the reality of the current Wall Street scene, where strong voices for the common good are rarely heard, models for characterization are not readily at hand. But Stone has also made an error: In fragmenting the image of "the good father," so critical to his life and art, he is left with two halves that are less than the sum of their parts. Contrast, for example, the image of the "good father" in *Platoon* (William Dafoe) with the dual vapidity of Holbrook and Martin Sheen.

But the fact is that Stone just does do bad better. In *Wall Street*'s best scenes we see stock manipulations in frenzies of buying and selling; many scenes end with apt translations of "Street" jargon into everyday terms. Douglas's satanic majesty has its best moment in a speech at a shareholders' meeting, an ode to private greed actually taken from a Boesky speech. The scene is shocking but powerful: it made me wonder about the last time in American life that some representative of the public good had spoken so commandingly (I thought of the long, eternal dourness of Common Cause's John Gardner, or the ever glum Ralph Nader). "Why did you wreck this company?" Charlie Sheen asks when even he is shocked by his Master's tactics. "Because," Douglas answers, with total aplomb, "it was *wreckable*." Like Satan in *Paradise Lost*, he gets all the good (bad) lines. But his is a strength that unbalances the film.

One index of Stone's complex mixture of strengths and flaws is his markedly different treatment of men and women. He seems not to have heard of business women on Wall Street or seen them chatting on Louis Rukeyser. Douglas's wife (Sean Young) dithers over answering a doorbell and smiles adoringly during her husband's speechifying. Darryl Hannah is satirized as a young artiste about town. This sketchy treatment weakens dramatic focus.

But this is a defect linked to a great strength. Stone understands male ambition—and views it with both sympathy and moral distance. As a result, he evokes performances from male actors—not only the older leads (Dafoe and Berenger in *Platoon*, Douglas here), but from supporting actors in "loser" positions (Kevin Dillon as a sadistic soldier in *Platoon*, here John G. McGinley as Marv, a young stockbroker). McGinley gets some sprightly lines (the best, an early one about one investor's "ethical bypass at birth," a good foreshadowing of the theme).

But Marv is a loser; he has Bud's ambitions but not his brains and lacks any perspective on his own life of quiet, driven desperation. Stone understands such characters extremely well; his moral power in treating their compulsions is that much greater *because* he knows them from the inside out—the way Tolstoy understood the rakes and rascals of Russia. The comparison is not overstated. Stone's promise as a

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filmmaker is in reaching real-life men with a realistic and fair view of themselves, one that they might understand, one that might even lead them to question their values. Stone the moralist is most powerful not when he lectures such men, but when he shows pity for what they put themselves through. He speaks their language—a sexist trait, perhaps, but one that allows him to be heard by a part of the population often deaf to moral address.

True, his populism has a chromosomal flaw, but the flaw is linked to his films' great virtue: they don't speak to the already converted. I'll take this film, even if flawed.

TOM O'BRIEN

THE DEMOCRATS' DILEMMA

Squaring compassion and self-interest

DAVID KUSNET

"It would just go against my backbone to vote just on the basis of self-interest," a young woman in Milwaukee told the journalist Jonathan Schell several days before the 1984 elections.

"It's true that sometimes I think a vote for Reagan would be in my interest," she explained. "But I just can't even begin to think that way. I can't even take the first step."

This woman, whom Schell calls "Gina Gapolinsky," was among a group of fifteen Milwaukeeans whom he interviewed at great length during the two months before the Reagan-Mondale election. In an effort to "find out everything I could about a handful of votes . . . instead of finding out a little about a lot of votes," Schell spent two months in the Sherman Park neighborhood of Milwaukee with one young couple, Gina and Bill Gapolinsky (Schell changes the names of most people in the book), and their relatives, friends, and neighbors—a sampling which splits eight-to-seven for Reagan.

Significantly, of the entire network of family and friends, only Gina Gapolinsky—who proclaims she would never vote "just on the basis of self-interest"—is an unambivalent Mondale supporter or, as Schell puts it, the only "serene liberal" in Sherman Park. Most other middle-class Milwaukeeans whom Schell interviews—from right-to-lifers who worry about abortion and the bomb, to a former radical turned businessman, and a union member who credits Reagan with restoring "pride in the country"—admit that they find their interests, their values, and their longstanding political loyalties pulling them in differing directions.

Schell's account of how the 1984 campaign played in Milwaukee (*History in Sherman Park*, Alfred A. Knopf, $15.95) is adapted from a series of articles that appeared in the *New Yorker* in 1986. Schell's report reappears as part of an ample crop of "1988 election-year books": discussions of the issues and candidates in the 1988 campaign, studies of the attitudes of the electorate, and recommendations for the Democratic party (which, having lost four of the last five presidential elections, may seem more in need of advice than the Republicans).

At first glance, Schell's book may seem the stalest and least significant of the bunch. On the eve of the 1988 campaign and after the stock market crash, the Iran-*contra* scandal, and other episodes in the lame-ducking of Ronald Reagan, it seems like ancient history to recall how fifteen people in Milwaukee felt about Reagan at the height of his popularity. Nonetheless, virtually every commentator who anticipates the 1988 campaign, from the liberal Robert Kuttner to the conservative George Will, keeps returning to the question that Schell implicitly poses: How can the Democratic party regain the loyalty of people similar to those he visited and interviewed?

Born after World War II, the children of blue-collar parents, but, for the most part, college-educated and working in white-collar jobs, the people Schell interviews are the new generation of Middle Americans. Moreover, they might be expected to be the new generation of Democrats since they are the product of institutions and experiences that are bone and blood of the Democratic tradition: families where everyone voted for Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy; parents who worked at blue-collar jobs and belonged to unions; older brothers and sisters who participated in the movements of the 1960s; and, as several recall, Catholic educations that stressed the progressive

DAVID KUSNET *was a speechwriter for Walter Mondale during the final two months of the 1984 campaign. He was also a speechwriter for Jerry Wurf, the late president of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees and directed publicity in AFSCME's organizing campaigns.*

History in Sherman Park, *Jonathan Schell, Knopf, 1987, 133 pp.*

Life of the Party, *Robert Kuttner, Viking, 1987, 265 pp.*

The New Season, *George Will, Simon and Schuster, 1987, 224 pp.*

The End of the Conservative Era, *Robert McElvaine, Arbor House, 1987, 336 pp.*

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teachings of the church on social and economic issues.

In fact, if anything skews Schell's findings, it is that, consciously or not, he found himself interviewing maverick members of what is still an unusually liberal community. Part of a congressional district that Mondale carried with more than 60 percent of the vote, Sherman Park is a rarity in Milwaukee or most major cities: a genuinely integrated neighborhood. Friends from Milwaukee tell me that Sherman Park was once largely Jewish and still has a substantial Jewish population, as well as blacks and white ethnics, all of whom live in relative harmony.

Sherman Park is also home for a number of progressive activists—community organizers, trade unionists, and liberal Democrats—who have influenced the politics of the neighborhood. Perhaps because he accepts radical politics as the norm, Schell doesn't seem surprised by how many of the local politicos are products of the insurgencies of the 1960s and how many of the private citizens describe themselves as former radicals and use a leftish vocabulary of class struggle that seems drawn in equal measure from the union hall and the sociology classroom. Even Reagan voters return almost obsessively to questions of class, and it remains unclear whether the vocabulary comes from their union-member parents, their college professors, the community organizer next door, Schell's questioning, or their own way of looking at the world. Whatever the explanation, Schell seems to have heard more talk about class struggle in the living rooms of Sherman Park than I ever heard at organizing committee meetings during seven years on the road for the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, including a two-month stint in Milwaukee.

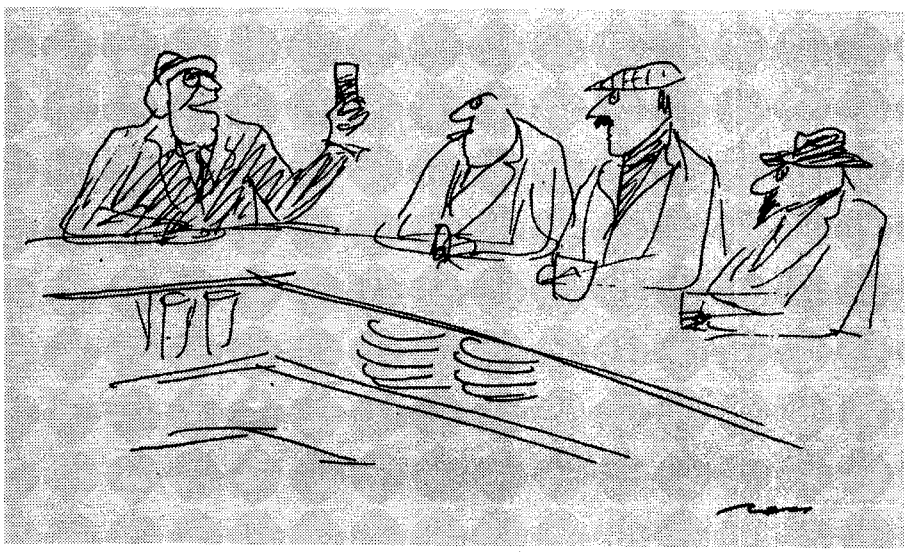
However, in spite of Sherman Park's continuing Democratic loyalty as reflected even in the 1984 returns, the people Schell interviews are disproportionately Reagan supporters. And so, while his subjects are not a representative sampling of America, Milwaukee, or even Sherman Park, they do tell an interesting story: how some people raised in the traditions of the Democratic party came to reject the politics of both the 1930s and the 1960s.

Much of the talking is done by Bill Gapolinsky, the grandson of Polish immigrants and the son of a man who worked thirty years as a shipping clerk on the night shift at a brewery. Aged twenty-six in 1984, Gapolinsky is married and the father of two children. Recently, his career has taken a turn for the better. He has been promoted from salesman to district manager at the company where he works, an advance to management status that requires him to resign from his union and wear a jacket and tie to work. Asked why he's leaning to Reagan, Gapolinsky explains that things have been going better, not only in his own life but also throughout the economy, since Reagan replaced Carter. Listing Reagan's accomplishments, Gapolinsky says: "One, he brought down inflation. Two, he brought down interest rates from the 20 percent where they were under Carter. There's no way we could have bought this house with interest rates at 20 percent." Schell fills in the details: The Gapolinskys bought their house in January, 1984, for $49,000, paying only $200 down(!) and obtaining a mortgage at 12.5 percent interest, with monthly payments of $656.

This good fortune in itself might explain why Gapolinsky would vote to re-elect a popular president during a period of peace and prosperity, just as his father (loyal Democrat and union member that he was) might still have voted to re-elect Eisenhower in 1956. Nonetheless, the Gapolinskys offer additional reasons for Bill's defection from the Democrats.

Bill and Gina identify the Republican party with the pursuit of individual success in the corporate world, and the Democratic party with positions of lower status in the business world or with groups removed entirely from the market economy — the blue-collar world, the civil service, social service careers, and ivory-tower intellectualism. Thus, as Bill moves up in the business world, they both find it natural that he set himself apart from what Gina describes, only half in jest, as "the unthinking, down-the-line, union-supporting, uneducated Democratic blue-collar workers." Gina, remember, is the Mondale supporter!

As the Gapolinskys viewed the politics of 1984, the distinction was clear: Republicans represent the winners in the world, while the Democrats are the losers. Thus, Bill Gapolinsky admires Reagan's skills as a fellow salesman and credits him with moving America back into the winner's circle, both in domestic and foreign policy. As for Mondale, Bill Gapolinsky agrees with him that the rich should pay a larger share of taxes, but wonders whether Mondale (or anyone)



"To the fear of inflation, unemployment, the bomb, pollution diminishing energy sources, bureaucracy - and, of course, fear itself."

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can change the rules of a world where "you can't beat big business."

Gina Gapolinsky, for her part, sees the world in much the same way. Explaining her support for Mondale, she describes herself as "a social welfare person" and acknowledges that the Democratic platform may not be in her own economic interest, a perception shared by many of the other middle-class voters Schell interviews. While Gina Gapolinsky sees Mondale as representing her values, if not her interests, several of her closest friends aren't even sure about that. Fred and Elizabeth Skoretsky, who work as occupational therapists for the handicapped, are active in the peace movement and the right-to-life movement. Because of their opposition to abortion, they end up voting for Reagan.

An unintrusive narrator who lets his subjects speak for themselves, Schell devotes surprisingly little attention to the paradox that the Democratic party, which attained majority status by appealing to the economic interests of families like the Gapolinskys, is now viewed as hostile to their interests, even by some who remain committed to "social welfare" programs and feel pangs of guilt and social vertigo when they accept corporate promotions. Part of the answer is offered by Thomas Donegan, a liberal alderman (and former SDS member) who represents Sherman Park: "You hit forty and have a couple of kids and a mortgage, and you know once and for all that you're in the class that's writing the checks for what the government does."

But Donegan offers only half the answer. Yes, the middle class pays the bills for the welfare state. But, equally important, the middle class, or at least its younger members, like the Gapolinskys, no longer believes it's getting value for its money. That is why, whether they vote for Reagan or Mondale, the young people Schell interviews tend to identify the Republicans with self-interest and the Democrats with altruism — a far cry from their parents who, more likely, identified the Democrats with both their own standards of social decency *and* their own self-interest and identified the Republicans almost exclusively with cold-hearted greed.

How this came about is explored by Robert Kuttner in *Life of the Party* (Viking, $18.95), which laments the loss of the "Democratic party's great unifying strength: the use of government to advance the economic condition of broad numbers of ordinary Americans."

Comparing the life experiences of the baby-boomers with those of their parents, Kuttner explains why many younger members of the middle class no longer believe the Democrats have anything to offer them. For people who came of age during the Depression and World War II, the Democrats provided nothing less than a new way of life for working people entering the middle class. Social Security, the minimum wage, unemployment compensation, college education under the GI Bill of Rights, and low-cost mortgage loans supported by the Veterans Administration and the FHA—all were provided by Democratic administrations. But, since the enactment of Medicare almost a quarter century ago, the Democrats, for the most part, have stopped proposing programs designed to benefit a majority of Americans, the middle-class as well as the poor, and have become increasingly identified with programs targeted to one group or another. By 1984, the Democratic ticket was perceived as offering middle-class voters little more than appeals to ancient loyalties, prophecies of bad times to come, calls for compassion for the least fortunate, and one easily understandable promise, a tax increase! No wonder the young middle-class voters of Milwaukee deserted the party of their parents.

Kuttner's majoritarian political instincts are sound; it is a familiar irony of the politics of the 1980s that it takes a neo-socialist to remind the Democrats to remember the middle class without forgetting the less fortunate, while neo-liberals like Bruce Babbitt promise sacrifice for the middle class and material benefits only for the poor. When it comes to discussing policies rather than politics, Kuttner is savvy but less specific, suggesting job retraining programs, universal health insurance, progressive tax reform, and restrictions on corporate mergers that swallow up funds that might otherwise have been used for productive investments.

It is a tribute to Kuttner's shrewdness that his prescription for the Democrats is echoed partially by the conservative columnist George Will in *The New Season: A Spectator's Guide to the 1988 Election* (Simon and Schuster, $17.95). Like Kuttner, Will comments on the phenomenon Schell observed first-hand: that the Democratic party helped to create a middle class which now feels the welfare state has nothing to offer it but higher taxes. Like Kuttner and the folks in Sherman Park, Will observes that national Democrats during the 1970s and 1980s appeared to forget the party's traditional constituency among middle-class working people. Even more than Kuttner, who is pleased by succesful populist appeals by Democratic candidates in the 1986 elections, Will sees signs that the Democrats have learned their lesson, particularly in a recent party document, "New Choices in a Changing America," which

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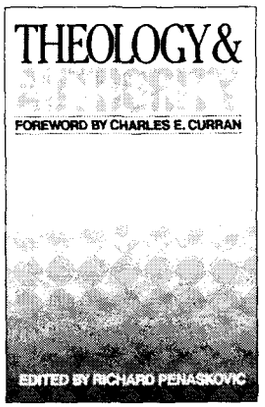
concentrates on the economic plight of the new middle-class family, with two wage-earners striving to make ends meet, and calls for new programs in housing, health care, and day care.

Among the 1988 campaign books, if Schell provides the journalism, Kuttner the programs, and Will the historical perspective, then another entry seeks to provide the theme music. In Robert McElvaine's *The End of the Conservative Era: Liberalism after Reagan* (Arbor House, $18.95), the theme music is Bruce Springsteen. An example of how a book may suffer from events that took place between its completion and its publication, McElvaine's offering has received much less attention than Schell's, Will's, or Kuttner's, and may have been unfairly dismissed as yesterday's conventional wisdom. McElvaine's book is filled with reverent quotes from Gary Hart and Joe Biden, as well as other prominent Democrats and pop music figures, but its underlying premise is the same as those two ill-fated campaigns, that, after eight years of conservatism and complacency, Americans—especially those born after World War II—are ready for inspiring leadership modeled after John F. Kennedy and recalling the shattered dreams of the 1960s.

The author of two histories of the Depression era, McElvaine is not just one more metaphysician of the baby boom but a serious scholar and thinker as familiar with the politics and policies of the New Deal as with the lyrics of rock musicians from Elvis to Bruce. In addition to propounding a cyclical theory of history similar to Arthur Schlesinger's—that eras of public-spirited reform inevitably follow periods of privatism—McElvaine seeks to develop a political rhetoric with which progressives can address a generation whose historical memory begins, dimly, with JFK and whose central experiences are Vietnam, Watergate, the malaise of the Carter years, and the good times of the Reagan years. This is not a series of experiences that produces faithful believers in the capacity of government to improve people's lives, and it is foolish for Democrats to continue using a rhetoric forged in the era of the New Deal.

Searching today's popular culture for themes that express a yearning for community, McElvaine suggests several ways in which progressives can speak to a generation that is skeptical of government, individualistic in its preoccupations, and basically optimistic about its prospects. He calls for an ethic not so much of compassion as responsibility—responsibility not only for ourselves but for our neighbors. He suggests that Democrats appropriate the Reaganite rhetoric of self-reliance, pointing out that the best social programs—education, job training, and child care—help people become self-sufficient. He urges progressives to distinguish between self-reliance, which we all aspire to, and selfishness, which is ultimately sterile and unsatisfying. And, at a time when everyone from Jack Kemp to Joe Biden finds something to borrow from the Kennedy

New Horizons in Religious Publishing



The foreword by Charles E. Curran sets the stage for this timely collection of ten essays exploring the relationships between theology and authority. Although the central focus of the book concerns issues in Catholic theology, the relevance of the book to Protestants—whose denominations perpetually experience the same kind of inner conflicts—is readily apparent.

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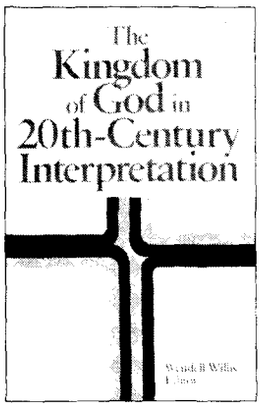

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legacy, McElvaine points out what liberals can learn from JFK: to rouse a complacent society not with prophecies of doom but with a call to action, not by saying we as a nation are evil but by declaring America is fundamentally good but "We can do better."

Following the demise of the Biden candidacy and Gary Hart's bizarre withdrawal and return to the race, the Democratic candidates are no longer presenting themselves as figures of generational change. The remaining candidates are searching for ways to meld a calling to a renewed spirit of community with an appeal to the bread-and-butter interests of middle and low-income people. Jesse Jackson emphasizes his passionate populist appeal to working people, farmers, and the poor; Richard Gephardt stresses his record in Congress in behalf of industrial workers and farmers; Michael Dukakis emphasizes his record at providing job opportunities in Massachusetts; and Paul Simon, who, ironically, may be the most successful generational and stylistic candidate of all — but appealing to the baby boomers' parents — casts himself as the heir to the New Deal tradition. The contrarian in the race is Albert Gore, claiming a constituency of Southern moderates by stressing positions on defense and foreign policy that are slightly more hawkish than the rest of the field.

For this entire Democratic field — and for the party they seek to represent — the question may well be: Which approach will return the Bill Gapolinskys of this world to the political faith of their fathers? Even after Irangate, even after the stock market crash, many opinion surveys still show the voters rating the Republicans higher on competence, just as the Democrats continue to score better on compassion.

Bill Gapolinsky was torn between a president whom he saw as offering optimism and economic opportunity, and a challenger whom he saw as offering ineffective decency. Between decency and self-interest, Bill Gapolinsky uneasily chose self-interest, while Gina Gapolinsky proudly opted for decency. Decency or self-interest may be the political choice confronting the wealthy, but it should not be the question facing middle-class working people on election day. As long as the Democratic party offers its own core constituency little more than the satisfactions of self-sacrifice, there will be more studies of Republican victories and more recipes for Democratic revival.

BOOKS

Making sense is making metaphors

TO DWELL IN PEACE
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY
Daniel Berrigan
Harper & Row, $19.95, 416 pp.

Peggy Rosenthal

Daniel Berrigan was a writer long before he was a political activist. And he has continued to be a writer throughout his busy life, publishing an average of over a book a year for the thirty years since his first volume of poems appeared in 1957. Writing is for him clearly a necessary activity, the means by which he makes sense of life as it goes along. Even a single day's experience is apparently incomplete for him until he has found words for it; such at least is suggested by the volumes of journals, poems, meditations, and letters he has published. His books have often, however, had to be written (sometimes literally) on the run. So it's told that he found the opportunity to sit back and write at length about his life as a whole.

To Dwell In Peace follows, for the most part, the expected chronological order of an autobiography. The early chapters are haunted by the figure of the tyrannical father who made the Berrigan brothers' childhood miserable. Berrigan devotes extraordinary effort to writing generously and forgivingly of this confused, violent man. Other arbitrarily unjust adults — relatives, teachers, nuns — also people these opening pages. There's plenty of material here for a psychological analysis of Berrigan's later battles against dogmatic authority, though to reduce his adult protests to their psychological dimension would be a mistake.

After a leisurely account of his Jesuit training, Berrigan traces the gradual development of his political consciousness. The turning point of his life, when he and his brother Philip "started to say No" to the Vietnam War, occurs — with nice balance — at the book's mid-point. Berrigan's treatment of the civil disobedience actions that followed is uneven, however, getting scantier as he approaches the present. We learn lots about his state of mind during the Baltimore Four and Catonsville Nine actions of the late 1960s, but the 1980 King of Prussia action (in Pennsylvania) is barely touched on.

When he comes to the past few years, Berrigan doesn't try to be chronological but centers chapters around his main recent concerns. There's a moving meditation on AIDS, based on his counseling of patients. And there's the expected evocation of the evil of nuclear weapons, here in the image of Lord Nuke. Expected, but not redundant of his other writings on the subject. Like the Hebrew prophets, Berrigan has the gift of indefatigable crea-

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tive energy for envisioning the sins of his age.

Throughout the book, Berrigan is pretty good about giving dates, as signposts of where he is in the narrative. But readers not already familiar with the major events of his life will sometimes be frustrated by a scarcity of facts about them. Who were the Baltimore Four? The Catonsville Nine? What exactly was the conspiracy charge that led to the scandalous Harrisburg trial? A future edition of the book will have to be heavily footnoted. Berrigan simply isn't interested in merely recording events or listing their participants. Nor is he very interested in justifying these events or his role in them, having done this often before. Here, he's interested mainly in reflecting on them, trying to make sense of them for himself.

Making sense, for Berrigan, means making metaphors. In this epistemology, shared by many writers who love language as he does, to try to understand something is to search for the right image for it. So the act of reflection — on an incident, a person, a problem — is a process of testing out images. Berrigan's tone as he goes through the process is sometimes playful, sometimes somber. In either case, he can be done with an image in a single line or can carry it on for pages, stretching and transforming it as it meets new subjects. Indeed, often the images themselves become the subject. This is the way the book's themes develop. They're the images that recur: our world as sick, as insane, as run by a war machine, and as ruled by the power of death.

It's here — in the imagery of death, of a murderous world gone mad with war-making — that Berrigan's roles as writer and activist meet. His political protest actions are always symbolic, and the symbolism is of death: blood poured on beaten nuclear missiles; draft files burned with the same napalm that was incinerating Vietnamese children. Berrigan suggests that his brother Philip was the one to envision these powerful symbols for their joint actions. Still, the visions are deeply Daniel's as well. And, effective artist that he is, he knows how to match the treatment of images to their medium. In the dramatic medium of the protest action, the image is a single symbol whose unmistakable meaning will remain firm and clear through months of publicity. In the medium of reflective prose, the image is fluid, slipping into new meanings as it moves through sentences. The symbol of fire in the Catonsville action spreads through the written lines from a firebreak, to a light in the heart, to Pentecostal flames.

Berrigan's rich imagination is sometimes, however, put to an unfortunate use. There are places in the book where he seems to love language more than he does the people he's talking about. Someone he doesn't think much of will appear only as a passing term in a devastating metaphor or will be dismissed in a caustic quip. Many people are granted no individual identities but are lumped into collective nouns — "the theologians," "the faculty," "the sociologists" — which then act as supports to the evil forces Berrigan sees operating in our world.

This world has plenty of individual villains, too, in his vision of it. Caricatures and satiric portraits are the literary treatments given to authority figures who have blocked him: Jesuit superiors, judges, and university presidents come off particularly badly. Maybe Berrigan intends these sketches to be comic, and some are. But some are downright vicious. Judge Salus as Caiaphas is hard to take, especially from an advocate of nonviolence. Bitterly satiric language is violent and dehumanizing. Yet only once does Berrigan show himself struggling against his lack of charity. Significantly, it's in the portrayal of a powerless person, the prisoner whom the FBI got to betray Philip at the Harrisburg trial. Berrigan describes his sadness at seeing this despicable "rag doll of a human." He wants to reach out in forgiveness but can't. "Only Christ, I thought, could love such a one."

Berrigan does deeply love many people, though, and his autobiography is enriched by appreciative portraits of them: his mother, Philip, William Stringfellow, Abraham Heschel, the Jesuit retreatmaster Père Charmot, the doctor who healed his back ailment, a young artist who died of AIDS, and others. The tender language lavished on these people contributes to the calm which is the book's dominant tone despite its moments of satire and scorn. The publisher's blurbs call *To Dwell In Peace* "poetic" and "lyrical." Those aren't very helpful terms, but I see what they're pointing at. The verbal playfulness which Berrigan can't resist (and why should he?) is put mostly at the service of his pondering. The moral outrage he expresses as always (and, again, why not?) is restrained by reflectiveness. So the book is quieter than much of Berrigan's previous writing. Maybe, having said his peace, he wanted here to *have* some of it — indeed, as the title says, to dwell in it.

REVIEWERS

PEGGY ROSENTHAL *is a member of the Genesee/Finger Lakes Nuclear Disarmament Network and author of* Words and Values *(Oxford University Press).*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 66)

How strange and yet, of course, how obvious that neither of us can expect to look at the lives of our clients and deliver any very useful advice. In the first place, everyone's situation is far too complex; they didn't call in the "experts" until they had exhausted the most likely solutions. Stevens's description of the watershed problem in Ethiopia makes this quite vivid. In the second place, only people who are living the lives we've come to assist are equipped to know what they can carry out and still remain true to themselves.

The real problem for those like Stevens and me, who are making an effort to minister to others, is that we can't stand suffering. Henri Nouwen, in his book for ministers, *The Way of the Heart,* has said, "What we desire most is to do away with suffering by fleeing from it or finding a quick cure for it."

Nouwen reminds us that our task is not

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cure, but compassion, and a willingness to go with people as they sort out the answers to the problems that confront them. Stevens might face the rapid decline of the Ethiopian watershed; I face the imminent dissolution of a marriage. Yet there is nothing we can do to speed a solution. We can only listen to people as they clarify their own problems and devise creative responses to them, responses that fit their own lives and their own cultures. I find myself praying all the time not to interrupt people's own problem-solving. Occasionally I can interject something, if I don't hurry, that helps a person to illuminate an issue or see beyond the immediate, but I have to be quite careful not to become grandiose and propose what I think should be done next.

Stevens sees that the situation is too complex for easy answers, and I think I've learned that, too. Our graduate degrees from high-powered institutions have limited application. What we both need is the ability to tolerate all that suffering so we can hang in there with people as they find their way out of it. Hanging in there with them is all they need from us, and it is the hardest thing of all for us to do.

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Note: The ad for the Rome International Bioethics Congress that appeared in the January 29th issue neglected to include the date of the Congress. It will be held April 5-8, 1988. Contact Rev. F.X. Murphy at (301) 263-2397.

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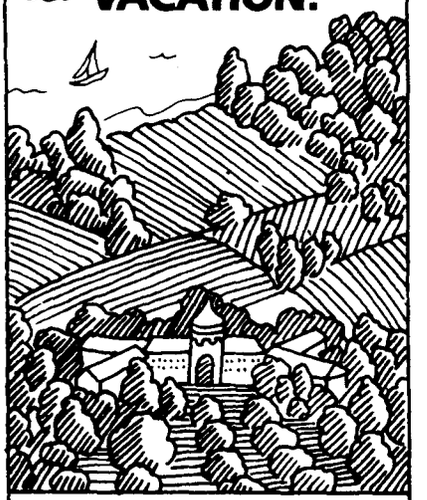

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The End of the Reagan/Bakker/Falwell Era & the Future of Religion

In bygone days, as the Reagan "revolution" and the Christian New Right seemed to sweep all before them, we at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW (an ecumenical monthly edited by lay Catholics) were urged to abandon our independent stance and throw in with the Wave of the Future. We didn't. As circulation took a downturn, we felt like pariahs. But then, popularity isn't everything and we've always been allergic to ideological stampedes. Now that the Conservative Bulldozer, which in Orwellian fashion would defend democracy by destroying it, has run into the ditch, and New Right TV preachers have had their financial shenanigans and moral squalor revealed, we admittedly feel vindicated.

However, the Religious Right will – after licking its wounds – surely be back to strut and bully again, for its power-lust abides. Armed with the bizarre ideology that America is God's Chosen Nation, it still asserts that so-called born-again Christians must "take power" and "run our own country." It's the old Constantinian, theocratic compulsion.

But Jesus didn't promise power and security to his followers. To the contrary, he offered hardship and danger: "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. . . ." The Caesaropapist quest for power is not only alien to America's best traditions, but inimical to authentic Christianity. As Kierkegaard said, "Verily there is that which is more contrary to . . . the very nature of Christianity than any heresy, any schism . . . and that is to *play* Christianity. But precisely in the very same sense that the child plays soldier, it is playing Christianity to take away the danger (Christianly, 'witness' and 'danger' correspond), and in place of this to introduce power (to be a danger for others), worldly goods, advantages, luxurious enjoyment of the most exquisite refinements. . . ."

America's Ayatollah-style Christianity would equate God's cause with a superpatriotic crusade against "Communism," such that one famous New Right preacher hailed the U.S.-sponsored Contra mercenaries as "God's Army." But this is just "playing" Christianity.

Not only is the identification of the faith with American Might idolatrous and self-serving, but it perpetuates the centuries-long scandal of Christendom: Christians blessing privilege and cozying up to Caesar while the world's poor – those the itinerant Jesus loved most – are malignly neglected.

Christians are now at a historical crossroad. We believe it's time to put "Shi' ite" Christianity behind us and return to our Father's business – witnessing to the Gospel, tending to the "least brethren," doing justice, making peace, and loving our neighbors as ourselves. Those who write for us include diverse people like Robert N. Bellah, Walker Percy, Christopher Lasch, J.M. Cameron, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Norman Lear, John Lukacs, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Richard J. Mouw, and Robert Coles.

Newsweek calls us "thoughtful and often cheeky." We bat around the full range of theological, ethical, and social issues, and defy easy pigeonholing. If you're "grossed out" by superficial, saccharine, and self-aggrandizing religion, and are looking for a "face" of Christianity that is spiritually tough, intellectually sharp, and socially responsible, subscribe to the NEW OXFORD REVIEW today!

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